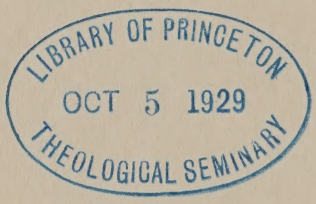
# THE SCHOOL OF SUFFERING

KEPPLER

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The school of suffering

# THE SCHOOL OF SUFFERING

*A Companion Book to "More Joy"*

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BY

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## *Preface*

Since its appearance *More Joy* longed for a companion and an assistant. For here on earth, when one speaks of joy, one also speaks of grief; if one speaks of life, one likewise speaks of suffering. And ever so many are too much weakened by suffering to be able to drink the exhilarating draught of joy. What they need first of all is medicine, bitter medicine, perhaps they must even submit to a surgical operation.

Therefore, I conceived the plan to publish a book on suffering as a companion to that on joy, and there was no lack of encouragement. The Great War hastened the publication of this "School of Suffering." I trust it will offer service and comfort to many a distracted soul. Its wisdom is not drawn wholly from the mind of the author, nor do its consolations exclusively spring from his heart. It is the wisdom of suffering mankind in all ages. It is Christianity's philosophy of suffer-

ing. It is the consolation of Him who has promised: "I, I myself will comfort you" (Is. LI, 12) and who drained the cup of earthly sorrow, redeeming mankind by suffering and redeeming suffering itself by directing it to a nobler purpose.

Therefore I hope this booklet will have a wholesome effect when used rightly. It will offer pleasing medicine to the one, bitter drugs to another, and it will prescribe harsh and prolonged treatment for many a sufferer. But no one shall go away empty handed.

The arrangement, while rather unusual, is the fruit of mature reflection. Lengthy discussions have been avoided; though good and necessary elsewhere, they seemed out of place here. The sick and sorrowing have scant patience with long disquisitions. Medicine is given and taken in small doses. Hence the brief paragraphs, mottoes, hints and aphorisms. The attentive reader will observe the intrinsic connection between them all and realise that the course followed in this "School" is logically constructed and developed.

# CONTENTS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| The Great Woe | 1 |
| Mankind's Burden of Grief | 6 |
| Petty Vexations | 15 |
| Calmness and Courage | 19 |
| A Good Friend | 26 |
| Suffering as a Teacher | 30 |
| Suffering as an Educator | 33 |
| The Nobility of Suffering | 45 |
| Nature's Healing Powers | 50 |
| The World and Grief | 61 |
| Christianity and Suffering | 69 |
| Christ and Suffering | 75 |
| The Mother of Sorrows | 89 |
| Consolation in Holy Writ | 95 |
| Mea Culpa | 103 |
| In Days of Illness | 108 |
| The Suffering Soul | 122 |
| Petty Annoyances | 128 |
| Wisdom Gathered from Suffering | 135 |
| Our Companions in Suffering in the Beyond | 152 |
| The Heights of Thabor | 157 |
| The Sorrow of Death | 169 |
| Conclusion | 182 |

# THE SCHOOL OF SUFFERING

## *The Great Woe*

1. Here it is again. I felt it coming. From afar I heard the iron tread of fate. For some time past the depression of my heart indicated a coming storm. Then suddenly it burst upon me like a tidal wave, like rushing waterfalls, like a flash of lightning and ruinous hail.

2. The ground is still trembling beneath my feet. My entire life seems to be torn out of joint, my labors and plans are trampled under foot; the gloom of death surrounds me, torrents of iniquity trouble me, and the sorrows of hell encompass me (Ps. XVII, 5).

3. The darkest winter night is lightsome compared with the blackness in which misfortune enfolds itself and its victims. It is night round about me, above me, within me. The blackest darkness within me, so that I am in

dread of myself. I stagger about like a drunken man in a deep abyss, unable to go on, and even less able to rest. Within me order has turned into chaos; my strength refuses to function; my will has dropped the reins and they drag along the ground; thought is benumbed as if by extreme cold, and action is crippled. Body and soul are each a burden to the other, like a married couple eager for divorce.

4. I have a strange feeling, as if my position in the world had been utterly changed, as if I had ceased to be myself. What seemed important to me but a moment ago, has shrunk to nothing; I trample under foot what seemed valuable; I am disgusted with what used to be sweet and pleasing to me; what I had scarce noticed and long since forgotten, arises before me like a menacing monster. My work, my calling, once my joy and support, are now an encumbrance, which I drag along as a prisoner drags his ball and chain.

5. Frightful days. But the nights are even worse. Each seems an eternity. Pain and

worry hurl themselves with redoubled fury upon the helpless victim and rend him as the eagle tears the flesh of a crippled lamb. The will rises with powerless anger against the tormentors, but again and again the struggle ends in defeat. The nerves are at boiling heat and wrap the body in flames. Like a stream of living fire the blood courses impetuously through the arteries, seeming unable to find its way back to the heart.

6. Oh, my poor heart. It throbs and groans as if it would burst, as if it fain would blast the chest asunder and escape. "My heart hath forsaken me" (Ps. XXXIX,13), the Psalmist complains. At times we might really think it had somehow left the body. Its beat comes to us as though from afar off; it booms through the night like the muffled, trembling note of a cracked bell.

7. "Deep woe remains a sullen anchorite, consoling friendly word and mien to spite." (Lenau). Truly, as quickly as one is marked by misfortune, one becomes as solitary as the pelican in the wilderness, as an owl in a ruined

castle (Ps. CI, 17). Job complained that misfortune had put his brethren far from him, and that his acquaintances had departed from him like strangers (Job XXIX, 13).

8. Others, too, once close to me, maintain a respectful distance, as though they feared the contagion of misfortune. They stand aloof and leave me alone; or they crowd about me and make me still more lonely. To be alone is painful; to be among men is unbearable torture. "My friends are full of words; my eye poureth out tears to God" (Job XVI, 21).

9. Solitude always used to be my friend. Now she is betraying me, surrendering me to the demons of melancholia. Nature, too, was my friend, yea a mother, whose tender ministrations made my wounds less painful. Now she also has become estranged and stands aloof like an enemy. The sunshine offends me; the forest deepens the horror within me; the rushing stream chides me; the murmuring brook mocks my woe.

10. Time heals all wounds. But it is a tedious cure, and its long duration spells pain and

torture. This time, I realize, grief is not paying me a hurried visit; it is billeted to stay with me. How shall I reconcile myself to this uninvited guest? He carries himself like a lord; he has the remarkable faculty of being present all over the house at the same time; he is everywhere at once, makes his demands known at all times, interferes in everything, and casts his gloomy shadow over all. Do not stare at me so, you spooky guest! Whence come you? What do you wish? Why do you bide with me of all persons?

## *Mankind's Burden of Grief*

11. Why must I, of all men, suffer so?—is a question frequently asked by the afflicted. It is a stupid, groundless, uncharitable question. Rather ask: Why should I, of all men, be exempt from the common lot? For all mankind suffers. Your suffering is nothing more than the small fraction of the universal burden of suffering that happens to fall to your lot. Do you alone claim the privilege of immunity from suffering? On what grounds do you base that claim?

12. Suffering sharpens the eye for suffering, or at least should do so. Since I have come to know pain, I have become more attentive to the sufferings of others. When things go on pleasantly, we are apt to overlook the sufferings of others and consider it quite natural that others should bear their hard lot patiently. At times we even look down with heartless, pitying criticism upon those who

grow impatient. But when one is bruised by the crushing weight of suffering, one's attitude changes.

13. Do not stare continually, as if hypnotized, at the one thing that oppresses and pains you. Do not pretend, in your self-pity, that you are the only, or perhaps even the most heroically patient sufferer for miles around. Consider the lot of your fellow-men. Go from house to house and you will find sorrow and pain everywhere, patent here, hidden there. You will be surprised to find it even quite at home with those whom you have envied as special favorites of fortune. For among the rich and those in high places it is even more intimately at home than among the poor and the lowly. There are more entrances open to it in palaces than in humble huts; more open breaches for its attacks among the wealthy than among the poor; and those accustomed to living luxuriously are least able to bear up under its burden because their nerves are more poorly equipped to endure than those of hardier folk.

14. The most harrowing complaints do not come from the humbler walks of life, but rather from the more prosperous. Volumes could be filled with their lamentations. It is an ever recurring theme: Favored by fortune, spoiled, and—unhappy enough to long for death. Tolstoi says of himself: "I had a virtuous, beautiful wife, whom I loved dearly, good children, a large fortune, which increased without effort on my part; I was respected, praised, famous, and enjoyed exceptional intellectual and bodily vigor." Nevertheless he had arrived at the conclusion that he could no longer bear with life, and was obliged to trick himself lest he should commit suicide.

15. Death is called the great leveller; but suffering levels all things even before death comes. Suffering is the great social equalizer. If the wealthy were immune from suffering, then indeed the poor would be justified in complaining against a crying injustice. But the truth is that while the poor man has many needs and worries which the wealthy man is

spared, the latter has his particular needs and troubles, which the poor never experience. The rich frequently suffer most bitterly from poverty—poverty of love and the grace of God. The poor man has one distinct advantage in the eyes of God,—the wealth and nobility of poverty. His possessions are small, but their value is greater than that of the wealthy. His pennies, well used and offered to God, have greater value than the rich man's banknotes. For the wealthy give of their surplus, whereas the poor give of their poverty (cfr. Mk. XII, 41 ff.).

16. No man passes through life without suffering. None but a fool can doubt this truth. The yoke lies on all mankind, and naturally its weight is distributed over the shoulders of all. Mankind at all times is in a state of siege. Unnumbered armies of suffering and woe are continually attacking it. The hostile troops pour in from all sides. They are constantly and automatically recruited from the innate weakness of human nature, from the imperfect nature of all human institutions, and

from social maladjustments, particularly from the pest-houses of vice.

17. When one calls to mind the duration, extent, and frightfulness of this war of suffering, when one considers the energy and sacrifices demanded by the defense against this invincible enemy, one might be tempted to regard all other aims, labors, and endeavors as insignificant in comparison.

18. Suffering is a world-power which keeps mankind constantly in a state of alarm, calls all men to the front, challenges them to battle, taxes their possessions and impoverishes them. Essentially progress in material culture does not alter this condition one bit. Refinement of the intellect does not lighten the yoke of suffering, but rather makes it heavier. Refinement of living, luxurious pleasure-seeking, softens; the frightful pace of modern life lays bare the nerves and leaves them unprotected.

19. Suffering is a world-power which taxes the energies of mankind even in times of peace. In times of war, however, this power mobilizes its forces in advance of the warring na-

tions, waging war on all without discrimination, directing its bitterest attacks now at one faction, now at another.

20. War is "the firstborn of death" (Job XVIII, 13). All that the world knows of bodily illness, of wounds and the agony and anguish of heart-rending separations, of exciting tension, of the pain of waiting and trepidation, of trembling fear, paralyzing horror, and brooding despair,—all these terrors are united and multiplied to highest potency in war. It is no longer the individual, but entire peoples who, summoning their last resources of strength, wrestle with woe and suffering. Not merely a few individuals, but entire nations lie prostrate in the agony of death. In war mankind's power to suffer meets with its most shameful defeats, but, on the other hand, also celebrates its most glorious triumphs.

21. In time of war it is the self-evident duty of the soldier to do his best, to shed his blood freely, to take upon himself his share of toil, pain, and suffering. That is the duty, too, of

every man in the incessant, silent, secret warfare of mankind against suffering. Neither here nor there can desertion be condoned.

22. Every man's portion of suffering is assigned to him by eternal justice, though we cannot ascertain what scale or measure God employs. That we shall know in the light of eternity. I, too, must play my instrument and keep time in the incessant symphony of suffering. The good and the pious ask for no special privilege; on what grounds could I claim exemption? It is disgraceful, says Seneca of old, to shirk the load, and the Apostle admonishes: "Everyone shall bear his own burden" (Gal. VI, 5).

23. Suffering equalizes everything and everybody. But it immediately redivides men into two classes: heroes and cowards, *i. e.,* those who suffer so that the purpose of suffering is attained in them, and those who frustrate that purpose.

24. Woe is me for my destruction, my wound is very grievous. But I said: "Truly, this is *my own* evil, and I will bear it" (Jer. X, 19).

This is the only correct attitude to take. My suffering is nothing exceptional, accidental, or unjust; it is merely my normal portion of a universal burden and a necessary part of my life. It is not something entirely apart from everything else, something that affects me alone; no; there is a close relation between it and the task of suffering assigned to my family, the burden of trial imposed upon my people and mankind at large. Just as in battle each separate wound is part of the whole of suffering and in its blood reflects the disgrace of defeat or the glory of victory. It is not a matter of indifference to me and my people and to the whole of mankind, how I solve my problem of suffering,—whether I prove a slave or a hero.

25. The bloodless heroism of those who suffer courageously in secret is as necessary to mankind as the bloody, boisterously martial heroism of war,—yea, it is more necessary. The moment a great trial breaks upon us, "we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. IV, 9). The eyes

of many are centered upon us, people are wondering how we shall bear up. If we fail at this moment, we injure not only ourselves, but the entire cause of humanity in its battle with suffering. If, on the contrary, we are victorious, our strength is increased and communicated to others.

## *Petty Vexations*

26. A great tribulation has one good feature: it does away with many petty worries. My soft self-pity kept me from mastering numerous minor annoyances, but my great sorrow has effected a thorough house-cleaning. It is a true saying that a deeply unfortunate man easily overcomes a thousand difficulties. The Stoics taught that pain is purely imaginary. That is an exaggeration, but imagination does breed, invent, and magnify pain. When we are free from great suffering, fancy makes trumpeting elephants out of mosquitoes, inflates the little daily annoyances of life to the proportions of a calamity.

27. By yielding passively to minor unpleasantnesses one finally comes to grow seasick over a storm in a glass of water, to fall into a fit of temper over too generous a sprinkle of salt in the soup, to fill the house with groans

over a tooth-ache, to burst into scolding and abuse over a tactless remark. Thus one forfeits the respect of others and embitters life for oneself and one's fellows. Domestic tyrants have a rare skill in making heavy burdens for others out of their own petty vexations.

28. How often have I permitted myself to be overwhelmed and put out of sorts by this swarm of gnats, these everyday annoyances and vexations! The upshot each time is a goodly sized boil, reeking with venomous pus for at least a few days. Would it not be better to deprive these pests of their sting by a vigorous slap, or, if their bite cannot be prevented, to squeeze the poison from the skin?

29. Suffering is the most important and most difficult of the arts of living. It must be learned and practiced. There is a gradual ascent from the easier to the more difficult steps, from smaller to greater achievements. Herein lies the vast significance of petty sufferings: in mastering them we train ourselves to master greater trials.

30. There are exceptional instances in which

we manage to meet great suffering in a manly and dignified manner, whilst we are completely upset by the pin-pricks of trifling vexations. But the rule is that he who does not master the little trials, is utterly defeated by the greater. Hence it will not do to persuade yourself that it is not worth while to be patient in these trifling everyday matters and that if you give vent to your feelings then, you will be able to meet a great trial, should it come, with full mastery of yourself, Remember rather that many small trials make for great strength.

31. We should, as soon as possible, install a storage battery in our soul. As a battery stores electrical energy, so we must acquire a supply of moral fortitude and constantly increase it by the currents of daily life and suffering. Each conquered pain, be it ever so slight, will add to our store of strength and increase the current of our vitality. If this current is fresh and vigorous, it will automatically sweep away a great mass of minor annoyances. A mere hint of the will suffices to

put the sufferings of the day into their proper place; once that is achieved, one's entire energy and vitality is available for the struggle with the great trials and sufferings of life.

32. We cannot begin too early to equip ourselves thus. The process involves a major educational task, to which F. W. Foerster (*Jugendlehre,* pp. 139 sqq.) has directed our attention. Even little children can and should be trained to bear pain and annoyances, and to derive strength from them; it seasons them for the great battle of life.

33. The child must be taught what to do with the minor vexations of life, and what to make of them; to learn sympathy for others from its own unhappiness; to be a little hero or heroine, by acquiring self-mastery and courageous endurance. There is nothing precocious about such training; the lesson is not beyond the child's perception and does not cloud its heaven of joy. It puts iron into young blood!

## *Calmness and Courage*

34. How often does not a great affliction find us pitifully weak! Our first reactions are commonly nothing to be proud of! A startled, confusing fright, cowardly, stupid attempts to dodge, to put suffering to flight by artificial hilarity, or stubbornly to throw off its yoke, unmanly whining and complaining, wild protests, followed by helpless surrender and dumb brooding. We act, says Seneca, like a wild animal which pulls at the snare, thereby only tightening its fetters until it is hopelessly caught. Suso compares the man who suffers under wild protest with a colt hitched to a wagon for the first time, rearing and plunging, fighting and exhausting its strength; gradually it grows gaunt, finally realizes its helplessness, and loses courage.

35. If this revolt against affliction, this refusal to suffer, becomes a habit, a definite

trend of the will, a fixed attitude of the soul, the consequences will be evil. Then we are truly kicking against the goad and bringing upon ourselves a grievous wound, the cankerous sore of an embittered, poisonous sadness which destroys joy and peace in our hearts and eats into the very source of life. "The sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. VII, 10). Here is a good rule of life: "Have pity on thy own soul, pleasing God, and contain thyself: gather up thy heart in his holiness: and drive away sadness far from thee; for sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it" (Ecclus. XXX, 24 f.).

36. We should not lose our self-control so readily under the stress of misfortune if we were better prepared for what has often come over us and may again befall us at any moment. Seneca admonishes us: "Strive to become so that nothing may surprise thee. The Wise Man says, whatever happens, I knew it beforehand. Fabius says, the most disgraceful excuse for a military leader is 'I did not expect this.' That is the most shameful excuse

any man can make. Think of everything, expect everything." St. Peter exhorts us: "Think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you" (1 Pet. IV, 12). For suffering is identified with life as oxygen with the air, cold with winter, heat with summer.

37. In order to remain calm in tribulation we need be neither Stoics nor sticks (to quote a phrase of Shakespeare's) but merely sensible human beings. If affliction steps over your threshold, do not demand roughly: "What do you want here? You're at the wrong door." Rather say: "Have you come to abide with me again? I have been expecting you; we are old acquaintances."

38. But do not leave the field to this dismal guest; do not turn over the entire household to him, while, sacrificing manliness and dignity, you sit and pout, or bow like a slave to his tyranny. You must put up a bold front to misfortune, not turn your back upon it; you must battle with it courageously. If that is done you may find Jean Paul's lines veri-

fied: "Evil is like a nightmare; the moment you begin to struggle against it, it vanishes." But if it does not take to flight, then you must wrestle with it until the break of day, and not weaken until you have forced it to yield a blessing: "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me" (Gen. XXXII, 26).

39. Every great trial is a cry of alarm, a fire signal, a call to employ your strength. Therefore it is a great mistake to hide, brood and complain. Brace up, grit your teeth, have the worst over with as quickly as possible, and pass on from suffering to action.

40. We commonly look upon suffering and action, enduring and working, as irreconcilable opposites. But they are not. Suffering should arouse energy, spur the will, grow into daring and working. As soon as misfortune has attacked you, go to the bridge of your ship as quickly as you can, and issue your orders calmly and firmly.

41. Most frequently we do not need the tonic of consolation in misfortune; but what we do need is work, motion, activity. Work

is the most unfailing cure of woe. To be compelled to work is a great benefit. In cases of death affecting us intimately, even the arranging of funeral details may be a comfort. Once the first paralyzing shock of grief is over, one cannot turn too quickly to active endeavor, to one's professional or occupational duties, to the charitable service of those in distress, or at least to a vigorous walk in the open.

42. If pain of body or soul casts you into a condition of inactivity, it begins to be incurable, absorbing some of the poison of death into itself. But if it stimulates you to vigorous activity, it becomes blended with the joyousness and zest of life and loses its poisonous sting.

43. But if misfortune paralyzes the powers of the body and mind, after the manner of a severe illness, then at least the will should seek to master it, to raise it up by willing submission, patient endurance, and a courageous spirit of sacrifice, from the realm of death into the sunlight of active life.

44. The chief means by which one may

quickly assure this gathering of forces, is silent patience. Noisy scolding, cries of pain and rage, cursing and storming are a waste of strength, to be compared with escaping steam. Straw, reeds and thorns crackle in the fire and leave nothing behind but ashes; gold makes no sound, is not lost in the most intense heat, keeps its value, melts in silence and comes forth purified. "For thus saith the Lord: . . . If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and in hope shall your strength be. And you would not" (Is. XXX, 15).

45. The moment in which a great sorrow enters our life is important and solemn; silly talk would but desecrate and cheapen it. Naught but reverential silence is becoming. Here, too, the admonition applies: "The day is holy; and do not mourn nor weep, for the joy of the Lord is our strength" (2 Esdr. VIII 10 f.). When your emotions are at the boiling point, by all means keep your lips sealed, lest the flame leap forth. Gather your strength in silence; then prepare to defend yourself;

arm yourself with wholesome thoughts and good resolutions, and fortify your will.

46. No, I will no longer play the fool in the struggle with woe and suffering. I will force myself to calmness and silence. I will harness the unpleasantnesses of life so that they will not disturb, but rather help me in my daily labors. I will not be a slave, but will make them serve my purpose in life. I will set the bitter leaven to work, so that it will produce a wholesome fermentation and will not sour my whole life. If we adapt ourselves to suffering, not only by passive endurance, but by continuing to labor whilst we endure, then suffering will fit itself into our lives, and we shall be heroes of suffering, not slaves of grief.

## *A Good Friend*

47. The reception we tender to grief is ordinarily unfriendly. This is quite intelligible when grief makes its appearance in its most terrifying form, in the shape of war, of serious illness, or of sudden death. Yet even if it arrives in a more accustomed garb, somber-featured indeed, but not frightful, and wends its way with slow, steady footsteps to one's door, it commonly meets with affrighted countenances, shy glances, and low mutterings of vexation.

48. In this case it would seem to have a right to complain of our complete ignorance of its nature and purpose; a right to smile at such superstitious fear as though it were a lord of serfs, a torturer, an executioner. It would have a right to say: "Look into my eyes and do not be suspicious; let me hear one friendly word, and I shall immediately assure you that I am a good friend."

49. Since it is not in our power to rid ourselves of this guest, why put ourselves at outs with him? Would it not be better to gain him for a friend? That is not only possible, but comparatively easy. His stern exterior conceals a friendly soul, the best of intentions, a thorough knowledge and valuable faculties. It depends entirely on us whether grief shall injure us as an enemy, or benefit and aid us as a friend.

50. This guest will be your enemy if you receive him as such. He expects a friendly greeting. He is a messenger from on high, who wishes to be asked concerning his commission: "What is your message? What lessons, what orders have you for me?" Whoever seeks to evade his piercing glance without asking for his message, will suffer the fate of Parcival, who, failing so to ask when grief first came to him, forfeited his salvation and was obliged to bear the burden of great unhappiness.

51. We must make it our task to overcome the prejudice we harbor against suffering. It

is as necessary as rain and storm in the life of nature. Uninterrupted good luck would be a serious misfortune. We must make the most of both the good and the bad days. The yachtsman who can sail only when winds are favorable is a poor skipper. The real art consists in catching the contrary winds and forcing them to fill the sails and drive the ship onwards to the goal. The brave man, says St. Catherine of Siena, utilizes favorable and unfavorable occurrences just as he uses his right and his left hand; he employs both.

52. Frequently unfavorable happenings are signals urging us to alter our course, warnings, perhaps, to turn back. They become hindrances only when we make no use or evil use of them. Badly employed, they become as hornets that sting us and cause blood-poisoning; properly used, they are like bees that gather honey even from poisonous herbs.

53. There is beauty and truth in the admonition: "Volunteer to go where you do not wish to be sent; compulsion cheerfully accepted is as good as freedom." To accept suffering

cheerfully should not be too difficult if we but think of the useful services it may render us.

54. However, it is quite true that when the storm of woe breaks, one cannot engage in lengthy reflections concerning its possible advantages. It is too late to equip yourself with arms when the battle is on. But it is all the more valuable, before and after a visitation of grief and pain, by way of preparing for it or of recuperating from it, to ponder the good features of it and thus to fashion an armor of wholesome principles of conduct. "Bind [such principles] in thy heart continually, and put them about thy neck; when thou walkest, let them go with thee; when thou sleepest, let them keep thee; and when thou awakest, speak with them" (Prov. VI, 21 sq.).

## *Suffering as a Teacher*

55. "Suffering teaches wisdom," is the thought embodied in an ancient Greek proverb. The earliest philosophers and poets recognized and valued this service. Fortune lies, misfortune is always truthful, declared Boethius, who made his observations in the darkness of a dungeon. St. Chrysostom writes: "Affliction is the best school of philosophy" (*Hom. in 2 Cor.*, XXVI, c. 12).

56. We know from our own experience that when a great misfortune shook our very being, a change was wrought in our spiritual life; we suddenly saw many things from an entirely different angle; we thought differently, judged differently, attached a different value to things. The lenses of grief magnified some things and reduced others; our entire vision and horizon seemed altered.

57. Tears dim the eyes, but they also cleanse them. He who has not yet looked upon the

world through tears, will ever remain a poor philosopher, immature and superficial in knowledge and judgment. The most valuable experience is that of suffering; it cannot be replaced by extensive travel or a wealth of other experiences.

58. Suffering is an excellent, though never a popular teacher. His manners are rather uncouth, his methods rigorous and trying, his seriousness overwhelming. But no one who patiently attends to his lessons will ever regret having done so. He will learn more in days or even hours under this teacher, than he could otherwise learn in months and years.

59. Suffering is also a convincing preacher, who has won many converts that had refused to harken to anyone else. He is like the Baptist in the desert, making straight the paths of the Lord. Without his guidance and his goad, many would never have found their way home. Many have arrived at the sunlight of faith through the night of suffering. As soon as the darkness is deep enough, the eternal stars break through.

60. The best teacher can do little with a wayward pupil. Similarly suffering can lead to wisdom only him who is willing and eager to learn. Strive to gather helpful lessons from your small trials, and you will find grievous affliction a high-school of learning. Unfortunately we too frequently cast overboard, the moment the storm has passed, all the benefits it has brought by way of improved judgment and good resolutions, and promptly disregard the lessons it has taught us.

## *Suffering as an Educator*

61. An early illustration of the educative value of suffering is offered in the history of Joseph in Egypt. Then, too, understanding of the importance of this aspect of suffering is a special part of the wisdom of living taught by the Psalms. Gradually it became the common possession of mankind. It is universally admitted that suffering is wholly indispensable for moral development and for the formation of character; that man cannot be considered tried and proven until he has passed the acid test of suffering; that a life utterly without pain would soon become as the Dead Sea; that all true and substantial progress of the individual and of mankind must be born of suffering.

62. If the ship is thrown off its course by a storm, the crew may perchance discover a hitherto uncharted island. In the storm of suffering many a person for the first time

discovers himself, finds in his soul depths of which he had hitherto had no intimation; and in these depths unminted treasures which he should salvage. Many of us, if we knew not need and distress, would never develop our full strength.

63. Life must be frequently rejuvenated and deepened. When all is sunshine and pleasure, life often becomes a peculiar mixture of elements that are foreign, external, vain, with few ingredients taken from our own personal being. It is a patchwork of weak volition, ignoble striving, and pitiable achievement; it is chiefly borrowed, begged, or stolen from our environment, from the lives of others who are not much better than we. Frequently naught but suffering will effect and transmit a new and more intensive life. Suffering teaches us to hate the soul fettered to what is exterior, transient, sinful; to hate it, in the sense of the Savior's word, in order to transform it and to keep it unto life eternal (John XII, 25).

64. Like any river, the stream of life be-

comes a truly useful and powerful stream only by having its direct course to the sea barred by obstacles, by being apparently diverted from its objective, by being forced again and again to flow in a new direction. It needs these meanderings and the ever recurring encounter with hindrances in order to purify itself and others, to add to its own volume, and to give moisture, and thereby fruitfulness, to the soil which it feeds.

65. St. Paul summarizes the educative effect of suffering concisely and forcefully as follows: "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not" (Rom. V, 3 sqq.). Suffering trains the Christian to be patient, and patience is the first test and proof of every virtue. Virtue fortified and proven in this school conveys an increased right to hope in God. In this wise the hope of the Christian is not weakened under the stress of grief, but rather soars in a higher and more joyous flight, sustained by patience, raised aloft by the trial of faith

in God. Therefore, grief to the Christian is not an occasion for whining and complaining, but something to glory in.

66. Suffering is likened to a wine-press, as we remember from the Old Testament. St. Augustine employs the simile thus: "Dost thou desire to escape the wine-press of suffering? It is to be feared that the grape, fearful of the press, will be eaten by birds or wild animals." Frivolity and passion are quite apt to spoil him who is spared grief and misfortune too long, or who fears them unduly.

67. "Before I was humbled, I offended," the Psalmist confesses (Ps. CXVIII, 67). Many must join in this confession, thus professing their gratitude to suffering. If the fruit-tree year after year bears no fruit, or worthless fruit, there is naught left to do but to dig round about it with the plowshare of suffering (cfr. Luke XIII, 8).

68. Honor, good fortune, well-being, enjoyment lull us to sleep. During the long sleep of the soul the more important organs deteriorate. Fatty degeneration and enlargement of

the heart set in. To effect a cure, God must take the pampered, overfed heart into His hand and drain it under the pressure of suffering.

69. God does not inflict punishment when He crosses the path of the sinner and imposes on him a burden of sorrow; but He does punish the sinner when He lets him "go according to the desires of his heart" and allows him to "walk in his own inventions" (Ps. LXXX, 13). "It is a token of great goodness when sinners are not suffered to go on in their ways for a long time, but are presently punished" (2 Mach. VI, 13). St. Augustine gratefully acknowledges: "Thou wert ever merciful to me, though angry, and didst pour bitter misery into all my sinful pleasures." (*Confessions,* II, 2.) "What a terrible punishment," he cries, "is the absence of punishment! If thou art leading an evil life and God spares thee, that is proof of His extreme anger" (*Exp. in Ps.,* LXV, 16).

70. Concerning Moab the prophet wrote: "Moab was fruitful from his youth, and hath

rested upon his lees: and hath not been poured out from vessel to vessel; . . . therefore his taste hath remained in him and his scent is not changed; therefore" the Lord "sends him men to order and overturn his bottles" (Jer. XLVIII, 11 sq.). Enemies, war, and grief are the "men" whom the Lord sent.

71. Every great public calamity is a crushing condemnation of unbelief and reveals the miserable weakness and sordidness of vice. It is a magnificent, overwhelming justification, proof, and glorification of religion and virtue, which on such occasions display their whole strength and heroism. During the late war one could observe how sudden terror and bitter need cleared the streets, even in large cities, swept out frivolity, and drove vice back into its secret haunts. Under such conditions the words of the Prophet are verified: "In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which he had made for himself to adore, . . . and he shall go into the clefts of rocks, and into the holes of stones from the face of the fear of the Lord, and

from the glory of his majesty, when he shall rise up to strike the earth" (Is. II, 20 sq.).

72. Grief is a stern disciplinarian; but it is also a liberator. If anyone has become entangled in a maze of thorny brush, he cannot be set free without suffering bloody scratches. Many a burning passion can be quenched only by the cold, strong stream of misfortune. How many would never have mastered their pride, anger, sensuality, or intemperance, had not misfortune, like a bolt of lightning, struck off the shackles of their slavery.

73. St. Chrysostom writes: "Praise is due the physician not only when he leads the patient into pleasant gardens, baths, and fresh waters, or to inviting tables, but also when he confines him to his room, and even to his bed, yea when he robs him of sunlight and partly or wholly darkens the windows; when he cuts and burns and administers bitter medicines. Whatsoever he does, he is the healing physician. Is it not unjust, then, to grumble against God if he treats us in a similar manner?"

74. One of the best services that suffering

can render us, if we will but accept it, is to break the spell of selfishness. Self-love is ever making a ridiculous attempt to set up and maintain a little human ego as the center of life and of the world, striving to cause everything to revolve about this petty ego until it grows dizzy and is no longer capable of any creditable activity. Engrossed in utter selfishness, man loses his true self, his soul (Matt. X, 39). Selfishness of this sort is a most dangerous form of disease, for which, too, suffering—borne as a Christian should bear it—is the best cure.

75. This selfishness must be combatted, if only for the reason that it will otherwise conjure up countless evils. Fénelon describes the process correctly: "As long as we are wholly wrapped up in ourselves, we are a prey to contradiction, malice, and injustice on the part of others. Our sullen mood exposes us to the sullen moods of others, our passions jar upon the passions of others. Morbid self-love is moved to tender self-pity; it cannot be touched without crying out as if in pain; if you touch it

with a finger, it believes you are flaying it. Add to this pampering the awkwardness of your neighbor, who naturally is full of imperfections himself; add also the bitterness of your neighbor over your faults, no less severe than your vexation over his. The only means to find peace is to abandon oneself, to renounce oneself, to lay aside self-love, in order that one may no longer have aught to lose, to fear, or to be heedful of."

76. Indeed, deliverance from selfishness is a painful operation, all the more painful, the more deeply seated the tumor. The living flesh must be cut into. Therefore the sinner should not block the arm of the Heavenly Physician, should not seize the knife, but should bear himself as a patient under surgical operation: remain composed and patient and coöperate with the surgeon as much as possible.

77. "Why are you moaning?"—an Athenian sculptor asked the block of marble from which he had begun to hew a statue for the Parthenon. "Because you strike me so unmercifully; do you not see how the floor is cov-

ered with the fragments you have broken from me?" "You fool," the sculptor replied; "do you not understand that you cannot take the place of honor in the temple and attract the eyes of future generations if I do not transform you from a block into a statue?"

78. The German medieval mystics designated the self-denial which combats selfishness as "Gelassenheit" (the condition of having given up one's self). Regarding this characteristic Suso said: "A man who has given up himself should not constantly consider what he may need, but rather what he can do without. In the very first moment of morning raise up thine eyes and say: O greatest good, behold, now I shall again begin to relinquish myself and all things for Thy sake. Repeat this a thousand times during the day. As often as thou findest thyself, so often relinquish thyself, until thou findest thyself as rarely as one findeth a golden coin. Know, however, that the nobler one grows, the more skillfully and determinedly must one leave one's self. In suf-

fering God leadeth man out of himself into himself, giveth him joy for all his distress, and heals all his wounds; then doth God draw man from out of the human order and place him in the divine order, take him out of all misery into the divine security." (From Denifle, *Das geistliche Leben,* 1874, pp. 423 sq.)

79. From the Middle Ages, too, comes the following story: A theologian sought a guide for his soul. One day he found him at the portal of a church, in the person of an humble beggar, covered with sores. Addressing him, he said: "Good day, Brother." The other: "I have never had an evil day." "Then may God grant thee a better." "My lot has ever been the best." "How is that possible? You are covered with wounds and sores." "True; but the good God has sent them to me. When the sun shines, I rejoice over the sun; when the storm rages, I rejoice over the storm, for God sends it." "Who are you?" "I am a king." "Where is your kingdom?" "I wield the scepter over my soul and will; and thus there is no insubordina-

tion." "How did you acquire this power?" "I sought until I found it in prayer and meditation." "And when did you find it?" "As soon as I had completely separated myself from all creatures."

## *The Nobility of Suffering*

80. Even in Nietzsche one may find sentences like these: "The discipline of woe, of the greatest woe,—do you not know that it has produced all the degrees of progress to which mankind has hitherto attained?" "How deeply men can suffer almost determines their relative rank."

81. A strange sheen of light suddenly emanates from the seething mass of molten silver ore at the moment when it approaches its highest refinement. Schopenhauer speaks of the gleam of silver of redemption suddenly blazing forth from the purifying fire of suffering.

82. "No one is ennobled without suffering," says Hilty. Seneca declares that noble souls are nurtured by tribulation. Suffering purges a man of all that is ignoble and unworthy, refines and ennobles his entire habits of thought,

sense, and will, and may even spread a transfiguring gleam over the most terrifying forms of torture and illness. Therein lie the sources of the tremendous influence exercised by the martyrs on the pagan world. All noble characters felt themselves attracted to them, whilst even coarse men were overcome by their heroic patience.

83. "The most painful evil afflicting human nature," says Pascal, "is, in a certain sense, a supremely great good, because more than aught else it can contribute to inducing man to seek a complete cure." Grief causes us to relinquish what is sordid, sensual, transitory, and raises our desires to higher things. Were it not for the thorny hedges to right and left, we could not continue on the upward path.

84. Frequently when all seemed lost, all was won and saved. Much of what we are we do not owe to what we have done, but to what we have suffered; not to what we had, but to what we were forced to forego. Burning summer heat ripens the fruit and produces a rich harvest. If the grapes were not bruised in the

press they would not yield wine. (St. Augustine, *Exp. in Ps.,* LV.) In great things as in small they that sow in tears shall reap in joy (Ps. CXXV, 5 sq.).

85. Suffering is a ladder that leads upward and downward. One can ascend by it to pure lightsome heights; but one can also descend into mouldy, darksome depths and chasms. The ladder is the same; everything depends upon how it is used.

86. Intense sadness, protracted suffering have the appearance of deep, dark, quiet waters. Yet beneath the turgid and seemingly dead surface one may find a bright, fresh stream of life springing up from eternal fountains into life everlasting (Jno. IV, 14).

87. The chords of the soul are apt to lose their tension in a life without suffering, without notable trials. Grief is the key by which they are again strung and put into accord, so that they may once more give forth harmonies, and the spirit of God may play His heavenly melodies on them.

88. "The fruit of humility is the fear of the

Lord, riches and glory and life," we read in Proverbs XXII, 4. Humble acceptance of suffering, in the fear of the Lord, endows life with a rich content, honor, dignity, and full vitality. The Saints rightly regard attacks of illness and misfortune as pawns of divine love and solicitude, as proofs of mercy and means of grace. One might almost describe suffering as a sort of sacrament.

89. "Nothing imparts more life to the soul," says an old mystic, "than suffering. It exterminates what is mortal and death-bringing; and when all that is removed, naught is left but life, and the greatest joy is born amidst the greatest suffering, for joy springs from suffering." (*Nachfolge des armen Lebens Jesu,* formerly attributed to Tauler, Frankfort, 1833, p. 296.)

90. This fully applies to suffering only since it was drawn into the scheme of salvation, since Our Divine Saviour entered into a life-long compact with it. From that time forth all suffering that seeks an alliance with Christ, derives curative and redeeming powers from

contact with Him; since that time suffering ennobles and perfects man.

91. These considerations supply the answer to the question troubling so many: "Why do the just frequently suffer more than others?" They would not be good and just without suffering; they are to be advanced in perfection by an ever increasing measure of suffering, to be urged on and enabled to labor for the honor of God and the salvation of men. Therefore the Prophet says: "Behold I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of poverty. For my own sake; for my own sake . . . will I do it, that I may not be blasphemed: and I will not give my glory to another" (Is. XLVIII, 10 sq.). The just, tried by suffering, constitute the nobility in the kingdom of God and His choicest troops.

92. If affliction makes your home seem unbearable, try to arrange for a holiday, a half-holiday, or a few hours of leisure, and stroll out into the open. Carry your pain-ridden heart into the fresh air and bare your gloomy thoughts to the sunshine or to the howling storm or crashing lightning. Or, if you prefer, flee into the mountain solitude or the impressive silence of the forest. In brief, bring your suffering into contact with the power and grandeur of Nature, and oftentimes you will return comforted and strengthened.

93. If in affliction we turn with open eyes and a receptive heart to Nature, she will nurse us with a motherly hand, apply gentle sunshine to our wounds, and comfort us with her mild breezes. Or, a stern disciplinarian, she will accost us harshly, reprimand us with her storms, scold us with her thunderstorms as

though she were calling to us: Weaklings, be ashamed of yourself; learn to suffer, for "every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain, even till now" (Rom. VIII, 22 sq.). Nature's gentleness and severity are both excellent medicine.

94. But Nature cannot always effect a cure. Frequently either our affliction or our mental attitude is such that no contact can be established between Nature and our grief. She does not pretend to be a magic healer and will indignantly turn her back upon him who worships her as an idol. The best consolation she offers at times consists in refusing consolation and in directing her client beyond himself to his Creator.

95. St. Augustine confesses: "I asked the earth, and it said, 'I am not He,' and all things that are in the earth confessed the same. I asked the sea, the deeps and all creeping things, and they answered, 'We are not thy God, seek Him above us.' I asked the subtle air, and with all its inhabitants this air made answer, 'Anaximenes is deceived, I am not thy God.' I

asked the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars; 'neither are we,' said they, 'the God that thou seekest.' And to all those who stood before those portals of my soul, my senses, I said, 'As to my God, you say you are not He; but tell me now somewhat of what He is?' And with a mighty voice did they cry out, 'It is He that made us.'" (*Confessions,* X, 16.)

96. In times of great distress two distinct messages may come to us from above: "Go in, and shut thyself up in the midst of thy house!" or: "Rise and go forth into the plain, and there I will speak to thee!" (Ez. III, 24, 22). We should obey both, but should accept with special gratitude the call to go out into nature, in order, as Suso says, to seek a divine consolation with dancing eyes, a cheerful countenance, and an exulting heart in meadow and plain, hillside and valley. Jesus, the Son of Sirach, says: "The Most High created medicines out of the earth, and a wise man will not abhor them" (Ecclus. XXXVIII, 4).

97. Nature, in silent grandeur, frequently shatters our petty standards, throws the frag-

ments at our feet, and offers us her own instead. Measured by the latter, many worries and sufferings seem mere trifles. Nature releases us from the spell of narrowness, enlists all our powers for the performance of great tasks, and then again she lays her motherly hand on our head and heart and advises us to be calm, care-free and confident.

98. The Saviour has imparted this power to nature by His reference to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air (Matt. VI, 26), by the parable, drawn so perfectly from the life and workings of nature: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring, and grow up whilst he knoweth not; for the earth of itself bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear" (Mk. IV, 26 sqq.). All of this goes on in the household of nature as it were automatically, without fear or worry, hurry or fretting, if but the seed be good. Thus also will a life filled with suffering bear its fruit. Therefore, cast aside

your worries and cares, learn from nature to be calm and silent in working, waiting, and suffering.

99. *Night* seems to be the friend of the afflicted only when she mercifully enfolds them in a sound, liberating sleep. If sleep flees, pain and care, fear and horror prolong the hours of the night into eternities; then somber darkness becomes a dreadful, stifling nightmare. Yet might also, "serious, gentle, dreamy, unfathomably sweet night" (Lenau), has a cornucopia full of consolation. Her deep silence and restfulness bring about the great equalization in nature and in the soul of man, and heal many wounds inflicted by the day. The quiet moon, with its soft, pale beams seems to be sheer sympathy, while the stars gleam encouragingly, radiating their light joyously, and respond like sentinels to the challenge: "Here we are," and "with cheerfulness shine forth to him that made them" (Bar. III, 34 sq.). Praised be God for the consolation of the night!

100. The *morning* comes as a consoler and

savior after a night of pain. Descending in the radiant beauty of sunlight like a youthful hero from the heights, victoriously piercing the darkness, scattering the fog like defeated enemy troops, morning pours a flood of golden light over everything and fills the air with ozone and refreshing odors. Then all the pulses of life quicken, and we are as it were reborn. Thanks be to God for the consolation of the radiant, dewy morning!

101. Not infrequently a condition of melancholia and depression is dissipated by a turbulent wind or a crashing thunderstorm, resulting in relaxation and a sense of ease. The uproar in nature, the battle of the elements, seems to have a quieting effect upon the struggle raging in our souls. The wild fury of the tornado, the growl of thunder, the roaring storm at times preach a vehement sermon to the troubled soul, rousing it out of sullen brooding and lazy complaining.

102. It must be a particularly hardened and embittered suffering that will stubbornly resist the magic of *springtime*. Ordinarily

spring, with its leaves and blossoms, its joyously victorious expedition into the stark realms of winter, with its wonderful waftings and weavings by day, and its enchanting dream-tales by night, with the singing and ringing resounding from thousands of feathered throats, chants a hopeful song of change and of the rebirth of all things, piercing even the shell of prolonged and hardened woe.

103. *Summer* with its flaming heat, its oppressive sultriness, depresses the nerves and saps the marrow of the sick. Yet this restless growth and silent ripening, the fields of grain with their golden waves and their strong earth-scent, the long days and deep-blue nights with their secret whisperings and gleamings,—all this brings inspiration and encouragement. Do not forget, unless the seed falls into the earth and dies, it will remain alone; but if it die, it will bring forth much fruit (Jno. XII 24 sq.). The way to maturity and life leads through suffering and death.

104. Melancholy *autumn* and *winter* may either add to, or transfigure, increase, and

comfort human grief. The pain of parting, the song of death trembles through the whole of nature. The brooks meander through the plains with repressed weeping; the springs bubble forth complaints; the denuded trees raise their arms aloft with sighs of woe, and frantically wring their hands. The last withered leaves are too weak to bear even the sunlight. Fogs creep up and drift ghostlike through the valleys. Slowly the last pulsing life is stilled in ice and snow. Nature in this condition would seem to offer but scant joy; nevertheless the keen frost and cutting winds invigorate the nervous system and instil courage for the struggle of life.

105. "My heart is troubled within me: and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fear and trembling are upon me: and darkness hath covered me. And I said: Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest? Lo, I would go far off flying away, and abide in the wilderness, and wait for him who will save me from pusillanimity of spirit, and a storm" (Ps. LIV, 5–9).

106. Far more pleasant and delightful than the solitude of the desert is the dark-green seclusion of the forest. Who has not experienced that himself! The wounded doe seeking a sanctuary in the depths of the woods points the way to the wounded soul. Here one is alone, yet in the best of company. The sturdy giants of the forest, the storm-tried heroes, take petty man into their midst and chant their mighty hymns. His unmanly wailing and trembling cease; he outgrows his grief and draws health from the elementary strength surrounding him. "Therein lies the strength of the forest, that it condones no weakness, but draws whate'er is ill and frail from body and soul." (J. V. von Scheffel.)

107. Have you ever experienced the liberating influence of a walk on hill or mountain top, or, better still, a climb to a high peak, when under the strain of great grief? As you go from ledge to ledge, from peak to peak, your sense of freedom grows, your burden seems lighter, your soul grows happier. A chat with the venerable summits that guard

nature, gigantic and gaunt, living as they do partly in heaven and partly on earth, causes the soul to cast off all petty tribulations. On those heights reigns a loftier sort of solitude; the infinite crashes like the roar of the ocean surf into the thousand-tongued silence. Nature is transfigured in supernatural clearness and majesty. The soul draws energy for new work and, consoled, looks up into the blue heaven.

108. Those who live or merely sojourn at the seaside and have become acquainted with the sea, will find it an excellent consoler, regardless of whether their moods agree or disagree with its moods. Now it opposes its brazen calm like a dam to our excitement: again it dwarfs and overwhelms our unrest with its own gigantic tossings. To-day the melodious chant of its waves is like a mother's crooning lullaby; to-morrow, full of sympathy, it may join in our lamentation with the loud voice of its waves, as a mother weeping with her sorrowful child. But when, as though torn by raging pain, it hurls itself against the shore and sends its cries to heaven; when out

of its unfathomable depths it draws and spews forth gruesome mysteries and the experience of thousands of years of suffering, —then it seems to shout at petty man with a voice of thunder: Why do you complain? Do you not see that I also suffer?—that my life, too, is storm-driven?—that every creature must suffer? One only can give rest and peace.

109. Nature is at her best as an enthusiastic comforter in her Thabor hours, when at dawn, at evening twilight, in a clear, starry summer's night, or in the hours of the mountain-glow, she dreams, transfigured, of the beauties of Paradise lost and the glories of the world to come, and, drunk with ecstasy, chants hymns of thanks to her Creator. To Him be praise, thanksgiving, and honor for all the consolation he has stored up in His creation.

## *The World and Grief*

110. Mankind in all ages was obliged to face suffering, to adjust itself to it, to argue with it. From the very beginning men sought the solution of torturing problems and perplexities as well as aid and consolation in suffering primarily in religion. Where religion failed, philosophy offered its services. The wise men of the ancient world studiously strove to master suffering. Some sought to rout it by riotous pleasure; others to steel themselves against it by acquiring complete mastery over pain and the emotions, and still others to conquer it by moral and virtuous conduct. (See Keppler, *Das Problem des Leidens,* 1913.)

111. Pleasure was staked against suffering. Men sought to increase the pleasure-content of life, to relegate grief and woe to the back-

ground, or to laugh it aside. The attempt resulted in a dismal failure. Frivolity cannot withstand the onslaught of suffering, but gives way to despair and pessimism. Therefore the last consolation of the old philosophers of pleasure was a reference to the safety-valve of suicide, when the atmospheric pressure of suffering became stifling.

112. Men strove to abolish suffering by force, by stubbornly hardening themselves against it and striving to attain complete insensibility to pain. Now it is true that the will can to a certain degree master suffering and control susceptibility to it. Yet the stubborn will to violate nature by deadening emotional life and thereby to do away with suffering is bound to collapse and end in despair.

113. The noblest minds of antiquity, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, realized that there is but one correct solution of the problem, namely, to conquer grief by moral prowess and to convert it from an evil into a good. They painted a glorious picture of such heroes of suffering; but it was beyond their power to

train and develop heroes of this sort. The Old Testament, with its hope in the Saviour, had this power, and now Christianity, with its exemplar of suffering, the Redeemer, and with its graces of redemption, alone possesses that power.

114. Modern science has not advanced one step in the solution of the problem of suffering unless it follows the lead of Christianity. Even to-day mankind, without God and Christ, seeks to trick and evade suffering by a life of pleasure and enjoyment. But it only breeds weaklings and cowards, incompetents in the great world-wide struggle of suffering.

115. There was a time when men sought to convince themselves and others that the tremendous progress of modern thought would make it possible to bring about a sort of Golden Age, to crowd grief out of life by increasing its content of pleasure. To-day it is frankly admitted that this cannot be done. Suffering sits astride the back of culture, and keeps pace with it, no matter what the rate of progress may be. Mankind must pay an in-

creased tax in suffering for each advance, each new achievement.

116. Joylessness and grief have become a wide-spread malady of the age. *"Welt-schmerz"* has its philosophers, prophets, and poets. Mankind has been taught that it is better not to be than to be; the root cause of all suffering is the will to live, which, therefore, is to be eradicated. Life is grief, for the sum-total of sorrow and pain always exceeds that of happiness and pleasure; that would continue, men were told by E. von Hartmann and A. Schopenhauer, until mankind would fully recognize the misery of existence and proceed to self-annihilation.

117. A certain type of literature and art violates and abuses suffering for sordid purposes. It tears the last concealing rags from the body of misery and gloatingly exhibits it to view. It brews a new irritant for the jaded nerves of bonvivants out of the most repulsive evidences of misery. Surely, that does not lighten mankind's burden of suffering.

118. Even the opponents of Christianity

dared not deny that its conception of suffering is sublime, its consolation in suffering effective, its discipline of suffering successful, and that it alone has succeeded in imparting cheerfulness to sufferers. It remained for the present age to attack Christianity at this well fortified point and to endeavor to replace the Christian teaching and practice of suffering by something "purer and higher." This attempt was inspired by the conviction that "if one would destroy the Christian religion, one must provide a substitute for it." (Aug. Comte.)

119. The Christian philosophy of suffering, it is pointed out, is based on God and the life beyond. That is said to be its great mistake. For "God is dead, and we are definitely through with peering into a life beyond the grave." (M. Maurenbrecher, *Das Leid,* 1912, p. 12.) Moreover, the Church's doctrine concerning suffering, it is charged, is selfish, low, nay common and sordid, inasmuch as it aspires to reward and happiness. What a sublime unselfishness! But it is out and out un-

natural and insincere. To cease to think altogether of oneself would be utter self-surrender, moral suicide. There is a selfishness which is sordid; but there is also a self-love which is a duty and a virtue and which cannot forfeit gladness and eternal happiness. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

120. Socialism in its early youth sought to vanquish hope in the hereafter by stressing hope in better conditions on earth, by promises of an ideal state in which life would become ever more beautiful, comfortable, cheerful, and the harmonious order of which would automatically banish grief utterly, or well nigh utterly, from life. Now it is frankly admitted that this hope is vain, and that another solution of the problem must be sought;—this, they say, is "the religious problem of Socialism in the second and third generation." (*Ibid.*, p. 137.)

121. The following solution is offered: We must accept our fate, with its measure of suffering, because it is necessarily involved in the progress of the world, which has no regard for

our grief or joy. It is better and nobler to remain firm and strong in spite of the blows dealt by fate, thus setting an example of heroic fortitude. At present "pride, happiness, and contentment" are contained in the consciousness of "taking part in the building of the generations, of actively floating along with this wave of progress; private grief and disappointment are submerged in the throes of the birth of a new future." (*Ibid.*, p. 169.)

122. These are high-sounding phrases, yet they convey little strength and less consolation. David Fr. Strauss, himself an infidel, disposes of them with this sober, destructive criticism: It is a miserable sensation to be crushed under the wheels of the great All as by a machine, and to be used as lubricating oil. If there is no God, no hereafter, no eternal happiness, then surely it is not worth while to apply intellect, reason, nervous energy and strength of soul to the solution of the problem of suffering. In these premises there is no other solution but: You cannot escape suffering; hence put up with it as best you can!

123. "Thus saith the Lord: Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord; for he shall be like tamaric in the desert, and. . . . shall dwell in dryness in the desert in a salt land, and not inhabited" (Jer. XVII, 5 sq.). "Go up into Galaad, and take balm, O virgin daughter of Egypt: in vain dost thou multiply medicines, there shall be no cure for thee" (Jer. XLVI, 11).

## *Christianity and Suffering*

124. Like wickedness and sin, grief and suffering are a mystery that will not be fully solved except in the light of the next world. However, Christian revelation dispels the darkness at least to some extent, in so far, namely, as is necessary for the higher and highest purposes of existence; so that the rough, sharp stone of grief may be converted from a rock of offense into a useful building stone, yea a corner-stone which can be inserted into the structure of life.

125. Suffering and death are effects of sin, and, like sin, something that should not exist. They were neither created by God nor caused by Him, and had no place in the original plan of creation. They have their cause in the free will of the creature, by the abuse of which sin came into the world, and by sin, suffering and death.

126. Consequently our manifold sufferings are not defects, or faults, or omissions in the plan or economy of Providence. God permits them just as He permits evil. He has not created them, but makes them serve His purposes. He does not will suffering as an end, but as a means to an end, and that end is the punishment and atonement for evil and man's salvation.

127. The night of suffering can cast no shadow on God and His Providence. His justice permits grief to follow on the heels of sin as its own offspring and well-merited punishment. Yet His mercy is made evident in that He is willing to accept this punishment also as a reparation, to recognize the consequence of sin as a remedy, to make of chastisement a gracious visitation, yielding "the most peaceable fruit of justice" (Heb. XII, 11).

128. Justice and mercy, however, find their most glorious and wonderful adjustment in the Son of God, who takes upon Himself all grief along with the whole debt of guilt, offers atonement for sin, and obtains reconciliation

by suffering and death; conquers suffering and death by suffering and dying; lifts suffering out of its enchainment with guilt, and thereby redeems it.

129. The atonement, however, does not spell the end of grief and tribulation. On the contrary, as in the life of Christ, they play an essential, important rôle also in the life of every Christian. But for the faithful believer the nature of suffering is changed. Freed from the curse of sin, it is no longer a hindrance or disturbance, but rather an aid and a means of advancing towards perfection, a moral force of great value, a means of grace to preserve and fortify the soul. It brings about and seals the union of the soul with Christ and assures, by participation in His suffering, participation in the grace of salvation and in His glory.

130. In this manner suffering is detached from the dark background of evil and elevated to a higher domain of life,—that of religion. It becomes a part of religion, a sacrifice by contact with the sacrifice of Christ. And the elementary religious forces, faith,

hope, and charity, prove themselves aids in suffering and sources of consolation, utterly incomparable, utterly indispensable.

131. We no longer have reason to fear, to flee, or to despise suffering; but every reason to regard it respectfully, esteem it highly, bear it patiently, and even to greet it joyfully. When it enters the life of the Christian, it is religiously transfigured, directed towards God, set into accord with the Passion of Christ, and employed for the highest purposes of life.

132. Suffering is a severe test for man, and also for the various religions. A religion which does not train and aid in suffering, which cannot solve the problem of suffering at least so far as to render a sane, moral conduct in suffering possible, the while life retains its value, in spite of and under pressure of suffering, is by that very fact shown to be untrue and worthless. Nor is a high and ideally sounding philosophy of suffering sufficient; it must prove its worth in practice; those who follow its teaching and live according to it, must find

in it sufficient strength, support, consolation, to enable them to bear up under suffering and to come out of the struggle as heroes.

133. The divine truth and power of the Christian religion is evidenced most gloriously in suffering. Our faith can point not merely to a few chosen souls who have come forth victoriously from the most bitter trials by suffering; but to countless followers who have proved their worth in this struggle,—to the Christian people as a whole, who in their vast majority have been trained in the school of suffering and who, even in most trying times, bear their yoke with fortitude and dignity.

134. What St. Paul says of himself and the other Apostles applies to the entire Christian people: Therein the excellency of the power of God is shown, that "in all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but not destitute; we are cast down, but we perish not: always bearing about in their body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. IV, 8 sqq.). Suffering

with Jesus and like Him, and imitating Him in their daily life, the people of God are at the same time filled with vital power and divine omnipotence, so that, even under the most severe suffering, they do not feel helpless, deserted, and lost.

135. Thus the Christian solution of the problem of suffering does not consist in a series of doctrines or directions, nor yet in an array of motives presented to the will, or of appeals to reason, or of means of consolation. No; this solution is found in Jesus Christ, who became a man of sorrows and who towers over all mankind as the one perfect exemplar of suffering, and exhorts us all: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. XVI, 24).

## *Christ and Suffering*

136. To live is to suffer. This is true in the fullest measure also of our Saviour's life on earth. The entire mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption falls under the law of suffering. Although joy was not wanting in the life of the Messias, grief predominated. He does not become acquainted with our infirmities (Is. LIII, 3) merely on the cross; He is the man of sorrows from the first breath of life to the last. Thomas à Kempis says: "All the life of Christ was cross and martyrdom" (*Imit. of Christ,* II, 12, 7).

137. Already in the manger He is the Lamb of God which taketh upon itself the sin and grief of the world. His childhood is overcast with the shadow of poverty, persecution, exile. His youth in Nazareth would appear to have been a paradise of unmitigated joy; in reality it was a silent, bloodless, but infinitely dis-

tressing preparation,—not only for His public life, but in particular for his bloody Passion and death, which He pre-visioned with complete clearness of intellect, pre-sensed with tenderest perception of heart, pre-endured with keenest suffering of soul.

138. His public life and ministry are darkened by the same cloud, embittered by much sadness of heart, caused by lack of understanding and appreciation, by the ingratitude and malice of men. The grief that burdens Him and the grief that lies before Him, increase His desire to suffer, so that Hé scarce can master it: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" (Lk. XII, 50). In very truth His soul takes the initiative in the Passion within Him, before the hand of the torturer is laid upon His body. The torture of his soul breaks into the life of the body, as it were; the heart, in mighty beats, heightened by fear, drives the blood out of the pores and covers His entire body with a bloody sweat.

139. The body of the Saviour, wholly untouched by the virus of sin, does not seem to have been subject to illness. In the Passion, however, this freedom from suffering is more than counterbalanced by tortures that spare no member of the body. Out of the bloody bath of the scourging the head looked forth unscathed and the soldiers conceived the gruesome joke of crowning Him King with a wreath of thorns. The agony of the crucifixion, finally, is a thousandfold agony of death; it embeds the body in burning pain and tortures all the members.

140. In this overflow of physical torture, mental agony also reaches its climax, indicated by the cry: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" We may infer that the suffering Christ was at this time not sustained by the sweet consciousness of being a child of God, and absolutely innocent. Christ took upon Himself not only the entire burden of grief, but also——what oppressed him with infinitely greater weight ——the guilt of mankind. It surrounded Him like the stench of pestilence and covered

Him as with leprosy. His passion was in the fullest sense a suffering for guilt.

141. From all of which it is evident that grief and pain are of essential importance in the economy of redemption and in the Saviour's plan of life. His earthly life presents itself as a combination of all the pangs of body and soul. His joy in suffering,—insatiable according to Tertullian (*De Patientia,* c. 3),—desired to experience every kind and degree of human grief. Pilate's famous *"Ecce homo"* is the expression of a great truth of universal import. There indeed stood man, with all his sufferings and tortures, the representative of suffering humanity, unique in history, gathering all distress, pain, and anguish in His person, and replying to each complaint of suffering: *"Et ego . . . plus ego"* (2 Cor., XI, 22 sq.), *i. e.,* I also have suffered, and more than you.

142. Suffering is the dominant characteristic of his life,and it is the picture of the suffering Christ that has impressed itself most deeply upon the heart of mankind. It was His

suffering that placed the figure of Christ in the center of humanity and drew unto Him the compassion, love, and confidence of all who suffer. Since the hour on Golgotha, the Cross, that dead, denuded, mutilated tree, dominates the entire world of suffering as a symbol and an aid, as the mark of greatest pain, but also of redeeming pain and redemption. All mankind refreshes itself from that one tree, barren though it be of exterior beauty.

143. Christ accepted the humiliation of suffering along with His human nature. Perhaps one should say: This was the sole earthly dignity which He accepted. His suffering invests Him with incomparable majesty and attracts eyes and hearts. From every crucifix throughout the world goes forth the cry: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow" (Lam. I, 12). The magnitude of His anguish challenges attention, respect, compassion. The marvelous beauty of His suffering stresses these demands even more emphatically.

144. In this respect, too, Christ is unique among the grief-stricken children of Adam. All the centuries have looked up with admiration to Him who bore unheard-of tortures with unexampled calm, patience, and dignity. His entire bearing throughout the Passion, His lordly silence and His dignified words on the Cross, the union of extreme disgrace with a dignity commanding respect, of holiest self-consciousness with complete unselfishness, of unquestioning obedience with fullest voluntariness, yea joyfulness of suffering, casts a transfiguring radiance over the pitiful picture of blood and wounds and elevates it to the most perfect exemplar of suffering, from which ever new rays and currents of consolation and strength flow forth upon suffering mankind.

145. He Himself predicted that His Cross and Passion would radiate beauty and strength: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself" (Jno. XII, 32). Lest this saying be understood as applying to His glorification, the Evangelist adds:

"Now this he said, signifying what death he should die." Suspended on the Cross, He drew upon Himself all the curse and punishment of guilt, and into Himself all the grief and anguish of mankind; and His wounds cry out to the afflicted: "Come to me all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. XI, 28),—refresh you by suffering with you, by showing you my countenance, by giving you an example.

146. Christ redeems men by suffering and redeems suffering itself. He "bears our infirmities and carries our sorrows" (Is. LIII, 4 sq.), transforms our sufferings into a means of redemption. Far from being a mere passive bearing or enduring of pain, His Passion is rather the most powerful voluntary activity and labor. At no time did He labor and accomplish more than when, nailed by hands and feet, He hung upon the cross. That was His greatest redemptive deed when he lowered His head and died, and gave up His life, which no man could take away from Him;

when he made use of His power to lay down His life (Jno. X, 17 sqq.).

147. Christ did not abolish suffering for His followers, but transformed it into an active, vital force. He places himself at the head of a grief-burdened race and exhorts them to follow Him, to carry the cross. "He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. X, 38); he calls invitingly and inspiringly: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Matt. XX, 22).

148. Of His own and of all who would have part in Him and the Redemption, He demands compassion and sympathy. A share in His suffering is the condition which He imposes upon everyone and from which none may be dispensed. Like the Apostle, each must "fill up [in his flesh] those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ" (Col. I, 24). *Per se* the sufferings of Christ are the complete and perfect sacrifice of reconciliation; but that they may be applied to us, our sufferings must be added to His, His sufferings must become our own. St. Augustine

says: "Jesus Christ suffered what He had to suffer; raised upon the cross, He cried out: 'It is consummated,' *i. e.,* naught is wanting of the full measure of my sufferings. The sufferings of Christ, therefore, are complete, but only in the Head; it still remains that the body and the members be drawn into this suffering of Christ; now we are the body and the members."

149. A peculiar introduction opens the second Evangelist's account of Christ's last journey to Jerusalem: "Jesus went before them, and they were astonished; and following were afraid" (Mk. X, 32). They sensed the dark fate He went so resolutely to meet, and towards which He led them. The Christian, too, follows the Saviour timidly on the way of the cross. But the more firmly he fixes his gaze on the Redeemer, the more conscientiously he places his feet in His footsteps, the more assiduously he strives to follow His example, the more closely he attaches himself to Him, the more will he discover in himself the vast measure of strength, comfort, blessing, and vitality

that flows from the Great Cross-Bearer into the souls of all who, following Him, carry their cross.

150. The imitation of Christ, which includes all duties, according to the express declaration of the Saviour (Matt. X, 38) consists chiefly in taking up one's cross and following Him. The community of life and love with Him is primarily a community of suffering. In this school of the cross there is, as in other schools, progress by grades. The path leads from Gethsemani up to the heights of Thabor, which can be reached even in this life, albeit no huts may be found there in which one might remain. At first one must overcome the fear, resistance, repugnance of nature towards suffering. In union with the suffering Saviour, by imitating his sublime silence and his mute resignation, the soul learns patient endurance, forces itself to it by calling forth the full power of the will: "Not my will, but Thine be done!"

151. The next step brings the realization of the great value of suffering. The soul learns to

regard and esteem it as a sacrifice, a means of grace, an evidence of the tender care of God. Patience becomes purified and ardent, and grows into a joyous preparedness to accept sufferings and to carry the cross with Christ and out of love for Him; regards it as an honor not only to be permitted to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for Him (Phil. I, 29); rejoices in being allowed to share in His sufferings (1 Pet. IV, 13), to be able to unite its sufferings and those of Christ into one sacrifice.

152. Grateful joy in suffering gradually enkindles in more perfect souls a burning desire, a sacred passion for suffering. Such souls long never to be without suffering; even in the most trying visitations they find courage to pray urgently: "More, O Lord, more!" And the more they suffer, the happier and more blessed they become, the more plentifully do the sufferings of Christ abound in them (2 Cor. I, 5), the more gratefully do they confess: "Thou turnest for me my mourning into joy. . . . thou hast compassed me with gladness"

(Ps. XXIX, 12). In these souls pain fuses with joy, affliction, and blessedness. What appears to natural man as an evil becomes an urgently desired good, pure joy, abundant gain. In this wise are fulfilled the beatitudes with which Christ blessed suffering (Matt. V, 5).

153. In the light of these considerations one readily understands and gratefully appreciates the practice of the Church in keeping alive among her children by various means the memory of Christ's Passion and in educating them to contemplate it frequently, to hold it in the highest regard, and to attach themselves whole-heartedly to the suffering Saviour. That is the best conceivable education and training for life's struggle. If the child is introduced to this greatest and bitterest passion and its heart is bound by delicate threads of compassion to the Man of Sorrows, it is at the same time initiated by the best possible method into the seriousness of life and the mystery of suffering. Next, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the chief means of keeping the Christ-

ian in an indissoluble union with the suffering Christ, since it is not a mere commemoration, but a renewal, rich in grace, of the sacrifice of the cross and a medium through which our sacrifice of suffering is united with the Great Oblation.

154. In the performance of this educational task the religious art of the Church has always rendered valuable and faithful service. The presentation of the Passion and of Christ Crucified is the most difficult and sublime task ever given Art to perform. The artist must picture the most awful mysteries in a reasonable, plausible manner; must portray extreme contrasts united into a superior unity by means of human figures and features: gruesome torture and anguish, and withal the peace of a soul superior to torture and anguish; the most disgraceful deprivation of liberty and freely functioning love; deepest self-abasement and an incomparably exalted nobility of spirit; human defeat and divine victory. The task is so sublime and difficult that it can be attempted over and over again, but never per-

fectly achieved. Yet many masters, with the grace of God, have risen to greatest heights precisely in attempting this portrayal and have produced pictures that have brought the faithful nearer to the suffering Saviour and led them to share His sufferings with Him. No one can estimate how often encouragement to patience, generous endurance, and hopeful confidence have gone forth from these pictures into the souls of suffering Christians.

## *The Mother of Sorrows*

155. At the side of the Man of Sorrows (Is. LIII, 3) the Church places the *Mater Dolorosa;* the two meet in the group of the *Pietà,*—the dolorous mother with the body of her Son in her lap. This second, feminine prototype of suffering is of inestimable value; its influence upon human hearts is particularly strong for the reason that precisely at the climax of her anguish, under the cross of her Divine Son and by His will, she who was His mother became our mother.

156. Her life of suffering, similarly to that of the Saviour, is a synopsis and accumulation of all conceivable sufferings and afflictions, and in particular of the most bitter anguish of soul. Her's was a trying career of poverty and lowliness. She recognized her miraculous vocation to be the Mother of God, as a grace indeed, but also as an unspeakable source of

woe. The Infant of Bethlehem was the delight of her heart, but He was likewise, from His first breath, the pang and care of her heart. She felt at all times in her bosom the point of the sword which Simeon had prophesied.

157. When the Son entered upon His heroic course, the mother's loss of His companionship inaugurated an external parting and estrangement, while simultaneously her fears for His life increased. For that the hostility and hatred of His enemies were being daily augmented, could not remain hidden from her.

158. Then comes His Passion, which is also her passion, and which again assigns to Mary a position beside her Son. The sufferings of both become indissolubly fused. The sole difference is that His sufferings are bloody, whereas her's are bloodless. This difference is merely superficial, not essential. If all those wounds had been inflicted on her, she could not have felt them more truly or more painfully.

159. Her suffering is the exact counterpart

of His. Not only the immensity and torture of His Passion is reflected in her's, but also His patience, nobility, and dignity. Like His, her suffering has a sacrificial character. Hence her upright, dignified bearing under the cross. She *stood* under the cross, as Holy Writ emphasizes.

160. The sufferings of the mother outlast those of the Son. When He no longer feels the point of the spear, it enters into her living, quivering heart. She sorrows alone when she holds the body of her Son on her knees and contemplates His wounds. Compared with this sorrow her later longing, her homesickness for her Son, which does not leave her until death, is a gentle and sweet, but nevertheless true grief.

161. The picture of the body of Jesus in the arms of His Mother has become a symbol for suffering mankind, particularly pertinent when we sorrow for those of whom death has robbed us. Paganism glorified maternal anguish in the image of Niobe, who turned to stone at the sight of her dead children. Here

we see woe unconfined, transformed into stubbornness, hardened and turned to stone. The Pietà, on the contrary, portrays anguish of a different sort,—soft and warm, reconciling the heart and lifting it up to Heaven.

162. The grandeur of soul of the Blessed Virgin, her heroic patience, her complete cooperation with the will of God envelop her entire life of suffering and likewise her extreme woe on Golgotha in a deep silence, a holy quiet, a gentle sheen of transfiguration. This imparts to the sorrowful Mother an incomparable dignity. For incomparable pain borne with calm and heroic courage, power to suffer, not only equal but victoriously superior to greatest woe, border on the majestic.

163. The greatest beauty, however, and the most exemplary value of this suffering, lies in this that it is not mere passive endurance, but full, vigorous activity, particularly at its climax. Under the cross Mary enters with all the powers of her soul into Christ's high-priestly sacrifice and labor, coöperating and sacrificing

with Him with a perfectly free and joyous will.

164. This sacrifice, too, continues for her after it has terminated for the Saviour. She holds the immolated sacrificial Lamb on her knees and offers It to the Heavenly Father. No artist has grasped this concept as deeply or portrayed it as gloriously as did Michel Angelo; his Pietà in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, is far more than a mother mourning the death of her son; his Mary is the representative of mankind at the great sacrifice for the redemption of the world.

165. With all its ideal sublimity and perfection this model of suffering is humanly close to us, so that identification with and imitation of it are possible and easy. This mother is our mother, and as her children we have a share in her sufferings. Under the cross her compassion was not confined to the Son who suffered, but embraced the sinners for whom He suffered. The word of the Saviour: "Behold thy son, behold thy mother!" gave to

mankind the mother of suffering and to all who are afflicted a title of her love, intercession, and aid. How much grief has not found consolation, sanctification, and pardon by a mere glance at the Mater Dolorosa!

## *Consolation in Holy Writ*

166. Illness and suffering spoil the sense of taste; but they may improve the taste for spiritual nourishment. The soul enmeshed in woe is filled with disgust at insipid, light, sugared, spiced, frivolous reading; it demands wholesome, substantial, refined food for the mind. It is then the Good Book again comes into its own, the Book of books, unequaled by any other in eternal values, in power to console, in beauty. Distress becomes its agent, places it in the hand of the unfortunate; brings it out of the corner of the home where, perhaps, it has long lain covered with dust, and cries even to him who has partly or wholly lost the faith: "Take and read!"

167. Grief is a careful student and interpreter of Holy Writ. Much of the contents of the Book is not understood until this interpreter begins to explain it. Suddenly wonder-

ful depths are visible here and there, unseen till misfortune has removed the cataract from the eye. The richer one's experience in suffering, the greater one values the divine gift of the Scriptures.

168. Clear, grateful appreciation of their consoling power is evident in the beautiful, proud saying with which the Machabee Jonathan in time of war offers the Spartans a renewal of the treaty: "We, though we needed none of these things, having for our comfort the holy books that are in our hands, chose rather to send to you to renew the brotherhood and friendship" (1 Mach. XII, 9 sq.).

169. St. Paul, too, speaks of the power of the Scriptures to console: "What things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope" (Rom. XV, 4). Through Holy Writ runs a weave of lessons, promises, examples, admonishing us to patience, which is the backbone of hope; everywhere sweet consolation bubbles forth,

inspiring hope to surmount the greatest obstacles.

170. Intense anguish of soul, sorrow of heart, inspire poetry and song. But they have never inspired more deeply moving measures than they did in the Book of Psalms and the books of the Prophets. There is no human affliction that has not its suggestion or song here; there is no grief for which there is not balm in Galaad (Jer. VIII, 22). Betimes the outpourings of pain and complaint rush on like turbulent waters; yet ever they are again led over the dam of penance and confession of personal guilt into the regulated river bed of acceptance of, and submission to, the will of God.

171. The most inspired panegyrist of Holy Writ is St. John Chrysostom. Evidently moved by personal experience and suffering, he praises it particularly as a comforter of the afflicted. He designates familiarity with the Scriptures as a storm-protected haven, an impregnable fortress, an invincible tower, an impenetrable armor, unshakable peace of soul,

and continuous joy. (*Comment. in Ps.* 48.)

172. "The foliage of trees," he says, "which shelters the little sheep during the noon-tide heat, is not as refreshing to them, does not offer them the longed-for and beneficial shade, does not invite them with such restfulness to sleep, as reading of the Scriptures quickens and refreshes sorrowing and tortured hearts; such reading lessens the force and the sting of pain and brings calm, more lovely and pleasant than any shade. It conveys bounteous consolation not only when one is depressed by loss of money, by the death of children, or in similar cases, but also in distress caused by sin." (*Hom. de Paenit. et Orat.*, 4.)

173. Whatever misfortune may oppress human nature, the proper antidote may be drawn from Holy Writ, which dispels all earthly care. Therefore one should not only attend to the reading of the Scriptures in church, but should also take them to hand at home and with great diligence profit by their reading." (IDEM, *Hom. XXIX in Gen.*, c. IX.)

174. "The green meadow is lovely, lovely is the garden, but far more lovely is the reading of the Sacred Scriptures. There one sees fading flowers, here one finds fresh, living thoughts. There wafts the zephyr, here moves the Holy Ghost; there the crickets chirp, here the prophets sing. The garden is dependent upon the seasons, but Holy Writ is equally verdant and rich with fruit in fall and summer." (IDEM, *Hom. de Capto Eutropio.*)

175. St. Augustine fascinatingly describes the effect produced on him by the reading of the Psalms after his conversion. He had uttered cries in his emotion; he had been inflamed by them, and enkindled to recite them into the ears of the whole world; he had pitied those who knew not those true medicaments or who ran mad against that sovereign remedy, whereby they might have recovered; he had quaked with fear, and again had boiled high with hope. (*Confess.,* IX, 4.)

176. "The sweetness of the Holy Scriptures is offered us so that we may survive in this desert of human life." (Aug., *Serm.,* IV, n.

10.) "Come to the Lord's table, to Holy Writ, but come in a wedding-garment, that is, clothed with the love of God and thy neighbor." (IDEM, *Serm.* XC, n. 9.)

177. Experience in suffering and the wisdom of suffering is embodied in the Old Testament in the figure of the pious, patient Job. He gives thrilling expression not only to his own woe, but to the misery of mankind. Guided by the starlight of Old Testament revelation, the soul burdened with affliction struggles, in the Book of Job, step by step upward, out of resentful grumbling and bitter doubting, out of the harsh conception of grief as suffering caused by guilt, into a belief that suffering not only punishes, but also cleanses and refines, and is a process of divine education leading towards probation and the fulfilment of faith and fidelity. (Cfr. Keppler, *Das Problem des Leidens,* 7 sq.) Therein Job remains an exemplar of suffering for all times. But infinitely above him is the *Ecce Homo* of the New Testament.

178. "I stroll with God in paradise when

I read in Holy Writ," says St. Ambrose. (*Ep.*, 49.) Pious reading of the Gospels resembles a stroll with the Saviour, during which one experiences that "virtue goeth out from him and healeth all" (Lk. VI, 19). If those stricken with grief seek Him there, He will draw near, as He did to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and say: "And are you sad?", will expound to them the Scriptures, and stay with them when darkness descends (Lk. XXIV, 15 sqq.).

179. The beautiful word of the Prophet applies to all the books of Holy Writ: "The mountains shall drop down sweetness, and the hills flow with milk: and waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda: and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the torrent of thorns" (Joel III, 18). But the true charter of consolation for Christendom are the parting discourses of Jesus (Jno. XIII–XVII). Comfort flows from them, mild as balm, potent as strong wine, fresh and inexhaustible as a mountain spring.

180. Holy Writ is a book of consolation given us by "Our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope in grace" (2 Thess. II, 15). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. I, 3 sq.).

## *Mea Culpa*

181. Nothing makes the world more nervous than to name affliction and guilt in one breath or, still worse, to establish a causal connection between the two. It is chiefly on this account that the world opposes the Christian doctrine of suffering, charging that the latter has only been made the more bitter by the Christian interpretation. The world would gladly remove suffering beyond good and evil. But, as some one has correctly said, nothing but the asylum for the insane is beyond good and evil.

182. It is stupid and a denial of experience to assert there is no connection between guilt and suffering. The connection is too plainly visible. No small part of our most grievous afflictions can be proved to be the result of a culpable misuse of the will, of evil passions, of uncontrolled conduct, in short the natural fruitage of sin. The piercing word of the

Prophet applies to those countless men and women whose passions and vicious habits have brought them into misery: "Behold all you that kindle a fire, encompassed with flames, walk in the light of your fire, and in the flames which you have kindled; this is done to you by my hand, you shall sleep in sorrows" (Is. L, 11). They have every reason to sigh with the Psalmist: "Evils without number have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me" (Ps. XXXIX, 13).

183. But does that not lead us to the harsh point of view, which Job's friends applied to him so unmercifully, that all who suffer are unquestionably themselves to blame, and that grievous suffering presupposes serious wrong-doing? No. It merely establishes the correctness of the Christian explanation that affliction has its origin in guilt and sin; that guilt and sin even to-day are still the most prolific and most poisonous sources of suffering; that all men must suffer in consequence of guilt and sin, since no man is innocent.

184. These seem bitter truths, adapted

rather to aggravate than to lighten suffering. But they are truths indeed, and we know that the truth shall make us free. Christianity has all the less reason to pass them by in silence, or to conceal them, because it knows how to prepare healing medicines for the sufferings of men by severing the unfortunate connection between grief and guilt, by atoning for guilt by means of suffering, and by uniting suffering in grace with the sufferings of Christ. The world denies the connection between guilt and suffering; Christianity abolishes it.

185. Christ took His Passion upon Himself to atone for our guilt. Herein, too, we should attach ourselves to Him. When a grief, great or small, comes over us, we can do nothing better than to strike our breast and say: *"Mea culpa!"* That is a thousand times more sincere, beneficial, and noble than to make a pretense of deeply offended innocence and to grumble over unmerited injustice.

186. Make each affliction an occasion to examine your conscience. If you discover the hitherto concealed connection between per-

sonal fault and this suffering, turn your back bravely upon it, as Suso would have you do. Then suffering has already brought you great gain, and frequently affliction will retire when it has attained the purpose for which it was sent. If it does not, then will that "kindly grief, which re-espouses us to God" —contrition—disengage your grief from your guilt; it will alter its character, will change an evil into a good, and will coöperate with you in your moral purification.

187. But what if the immediate connection between your suffering and some fault of yours cannot be discerned? In that event, too, look upon your affliction as a signal, an admonition to humble yourself, to enkindle contrition for all the sins of your life, and to offer up your suffering in atonement for them. To establish the connection in this manner again means to solve it. Suffering, through the power of Jesus, absorbs the guilt, and the tears dropping from the contrite heart, mingled with the Blood of Christ, form the best healing balm.

188. "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: I am turned in my anguish, whilst the thorn is fastened; I have acknowledged my sin to thee, and my injustice I have not concealed. I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord; and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin" (Ps. XXXI, 4 sqq.). Many will have reason to join in this joyous and grateful confession.

189. But, you say, I positively can find no fault in my heart or in my life, which I could bring into any sort of relation to my great misfortune, or for which I should atone by suffering.—I fear you belong in that asylum which alone is beyond good and evil. Most assuredly you cannot count yourself among the saints; for none of them ever thought or spoke as you do.

190. "Prove me, O God, and know my heart; examine me, and know my paths; and see if there be in me the way of iniquity, and lead me in the eternal way" (Ps. CXXXVIII, 23 sq.),—if need be through thorny brush and barbed-wire fences.

## *In Days of Illness*

191. "Wilt thou be made whole?" the Saviour asked the man at the pool of Bethsaida, who "had been under his infirmity eight and thirty years" (Jno. V, 63). This question seems as superfluous as the one He addressed to the blind man at Jericho: "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" (Lk. XVIII,41). Yet Jesus is not the man to ask superfluous questions. If you lay the emphasis on the "Wilt thou," a deep meaning is apparent in the question quoted. The infirm man at Bethsaida seems to have grasped it, for he immediately relates what he has done in order to regain health, and why he could do no more, as if he would say: I have the will to get well and have applied it to the limit of my power.

192. What influence can the will have on contracting illness or regaining health? Is there any one who wills to be ill? Is there a

sick person anywhere who does not will to be well? But there is a difference between will and will. A strong, really dominant will can achieve more than is commonly believed.

193. A healthy will can prevent and suppress sickness, can promote and stimulate the return to health; at any rate, it can remain lord and master during illness. Unfortunately, however, the human will commonly surrenders its mastery and flees at the approach of illness, or is taken captive during the very first attack of the contagion. Would it not be well if physicians more frequently enlisted the will as an ally and assistant?

194. It is well known that some patients suffer from imaginary illness. Calderon's word applies to them: "You need not wait for another disease; your worst illness is yourself." (*The Constant Prince,* Act III.) In such cases there is but one remedy to apply: the morbid will must be refashioned by a diligent effort and inspired with a firm purpose to be well.

195. But what of the daily increasing num-

ber of nervous persons, of neurotics and neurasthenics? We have a great pity for them and are far from casting the blame for their condition upon them. However, it is probably not an injustice to assume that quite a number of them, by a more energetic exercise of the will, could, in the beginning, have gained control over their suffering and have held it in bounds. Frequently what is considered physical weakness or an unhealthy condition of the nerves is in reality weakness of the soul or of the will.

196. Nervousness has become little short of an epidemic. Its spread is being fostered by a certain degenerate art and literature, indulgence of the appetite for pleasure, alcoholism, unreasonable habits of living, the restlessness and haste of modern life. Nothing but a strong will, exerting its dominion by application to work, could prevent infection and even hold the evil in check. But how is the will to exercise its power under the vogue of extended rest-cures prescribed for "quieting the nerves." The nerves commonly take ad-

vantage of these vacations, while the will is, perforce, dormant, to seize the reins of mastery and to set themselves up as petty tyrants. Work carried to excess is enervating; work in moderation cures and strengthens the nerves.

197. Frequently the most intolerable patients are not those seriously ill, but those slightly afflicted. One overcomes a slight indisposition most quickly by ignoring it. A physician once said that in order to feel well one should have some slight malady. St. Francis de Sales declared that he never felt better than when he was mildly indisposed. Minor disorders should never be permitted to disturb one's daily order, interfere with the fulfilment of duty, or embitter living with others.

198. Do not yield to illness too soon, nor yet too late! The physician must decide when work is to be laid down, when an office is to be resigned, when headquarters are to be transferred to the sick-room. To drag out this moment until you collapse, would not show

strength of will, but foolish obstinacy, and would prove that you are managing precious gifts badly.

199. There is one faculty that must never capitulate, even though all one's members and all powers of the body surrender to illness and lay down their arms; even if the brain yields itself captive and has become almost incapable of functioning; one faculty must keep control of the forces, even if all the outer fortifications are lost and it is obliged to entrench itself in the last ditch, in the very heart of its domain,—the will.

200. Severe illness truly resembles a state of war. The objective must be to overcome the enemy and to force him to withdraw, or, if that is impossible, to induce him to become an ally and a useful friend. The one as well as the other of these objects can be attained only by a determined will in harmonious cooperation with the physician. Man is frequently inclined to overestimate his own powers; his faculty for suffering, however, he commonly underestimates. Bodily ail-

ments naturally affect the soul by sympathy; but the soul enjoys sufficient independence to enable it to retain health even in a sick body. And if its own powers are not adequate, it should strengthen them by the use of supernatural auxiliary forces.

201. The hour in which serious illness attacks the body, whether by surprise or after a formal declaration of war, always marks a serious event. In this crisis one should not waste time by pretending, or having others help one to pretend, that the condition is not serious, or by complaining or worrying. On the contrary: the will should immediately be made commander-in-chief and should firmly and quietly order whatever the emergency demands. But if the affliction has mastered the will and made it a prisoner, the command passes to others, and naturally, the supreme command is automatically vested in the attending physician.

202. In severe illness the will, which is still master of itself, has many temporal matters to put in order. But notwithstanding the at-

tention they demand, the most important transaction must not be overlooked: to translate the illness immediately from the realm of the natural into the sacred domain of the supernatural, of faith in God and service to God. Therefore the first thing necessary, as soon as the faithful soul, stricken with illness, has regained control of itself, is to raise its eyes to God and to breathe an humble prayer for His blessing, for strength to suffer, for health to live well, or for grace to die well.

203. This will remain the constant duty of the Christian day after day, by day and by night: to prepare a sacrifice of his sufferings and pains, a sacrifice of atonement, of thanksgiving, of praise, to present his body as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God (Rom. XII, 1), and to glorify and bear God in his body (1 Cor. VI, 20) even in days of suffering.

204. The Christian feels himself as a member of Christ (1 Cor. VI, 15); he believes and knows his suffering can be placed into a grace-imparting relation to the Passion of Christ.

His eyes and heart are opened: before him stands the Man of Sorrows, inviting him to follow Him in carrying the cross. He is no longer alone; he has a companion in suffering, a guide, a consoler; he sanctifies his suffering in the suffering of Christ; he seals this community of suffering and love by Holy Communion.

205. The character of the illness, however, is not thereby changed; it continues to weaken the body and to depress the soul. But it ceases to be a hostile force with which one lives in enmity, to whom one bows as only a slave would bow to a tyrant. The soul becomes reconciled to illness; the will forms an alliance and coöperates with it. The patient begins to realize that he is indebted to illness for much that is good.

206. The good services and advantages of illness must not be forgotten. How often has it not led straying souls back to the right path! How often has it not (perhaps at the eleventh hour) given a new purpose to a misspent life and assisted it towards a good end!

Nowadays men have no time for the life of the soul. Sickness makes us take time. It leads us out of the turmoil of the world into solitude. It brings us nearer to God. Once we realize this fact, we shall begin to thank God for the graces He confers upon us through sickness. A man inured to suffering once told me, "God is a good, a stirringly good remedy for the poor sick."

207. "I am unable to work, unable to do anything!" This is a common complaint, particularly in lingering illness. Do not complain and whine so much! Rather do as much as you can in spite of your sickness. Create a sphere of activity, no matter how limited it may be, around your sick-bed. It is surprising how much a determined will can accomplish even when seconded only by slight physical strength. You must be inventive. If your right hand fails you, try the left; if your brain will not function properly, perhaps your arms and hands will find something useful to do; if the body cannot work, perhaps the mind can. If

you can no longer study, you can at least pray; if you must stop writing books, perhaps you can teach a child his A. B. C.; if you cannot practice your craft, you may still be able to carve a toy for some little one; if you cannot manage your household, you probably can still ply a pair of knitting-needles. Every form of work, no matter how mechanical and insignificant, introduces activity into passive suffering and thereby acts as a strengthening tonic, helps pass the time, increases self-confidence, exercises the will.

208. I learned the importance and soothing influence of a firmly established and scrupulously followed daily routine that prudently divides the hours between prayer, work, reading, solitude and entertaining visitors, from a noble-minded young priest. From the day of his First Mass until his death, ten months later, he was confined to the sick-room and by means of such a schedule mastered that dismal ennui which is frequently the greatest torture of the sick; he always had

something to do, and his declining life was a beautiful and peaceful endeavor till the hour of his happy death.

209. If your illness becomes so painful as to prevent all activity; if even thinking and praying become an unmitigated torture, then patient endurance is a sacrificial act, which derives its merit from the sufferings of Christ, hallows and makes fruitful even the nights, sleepless and burdened with anguish, which seem to have no end. "You will be more pleasing to God," says St. Chrysostom, "if you submit to His will in sickness, than if you perform ever so many good works in good health." (*In Job,* c. 1.)

210. It is indeed a painful privation to be forced to remain away from the house of God; but there is a substitute for this also. The words of Our Saviour concerning the hour when men "shall adore the Father neither on the mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in the spirit and in truth" (Jno. IV 21 sq.), apply to those in this plight. This kind of divine service is possible in the sick-room also.

The ringing of the church bells and their tolling at the elevation is wafted even into the patient's chamber and enables him to participate in the worship of the congregation. The fruit and blessing of the Mass benefit the sick also. A good intention transforms suffering into divine service, and He, who is the soul of all our adoration of God, finds His way even into the dingy room of the poorest of the sick.

211. There is a simple test by which to ascertain whether one is suffering well or badly. If affliction makes us calm, contented, meek, and gentle, it is producing good fruit. But if we grow harsh, exacting, irritable, moody, uncharitable, we are backward pupils in the school of suffering. Only sordid egotism makes illness yield the privilege of annoying others and of being more of a burden to them than is necessary, as though one would make them suffer for one's own affliction.

212. Whoever suffers in the spirit of Christ breaks the spell of ignoble selfishness, forces himself to be friendly and kind to others. This

is a difficult process at first. Even to force a smile may involve a heroic conquest of self. A determined will must suppress bitter complaints and harsh words formed by the lips under the lash of torturing pain. Christian charity relieves the heart crushed under pressure of woe and permits it to expand again; filled with love, the heart, itself pitifully in need of help, well nigh barren of joy and consolation, becomes intent on imparting joy, assistance and comfort to others, eager to exchange sickness for good deeds, grief for kindness. That represents the sunny height of suffering. Blessed he who reaches this height!

213. It is not true that a sick man cannot make himself useful to others. In matter of fact the sick have a distinct social mission. They can achieve more for their suffering fellow-mortals than can the healthy; because they themselves suffer and because their suffering adds great value even to small gifts, a pleasing note to a kind word, weight to good counsel, emphasis to admonition, sweetness to consolation. But the most valuable gift

the sick man can dispense is the good example of suffering with Christian fortitude. A whole family will derive strength for generations from one such example. By your example you will sustain many others; your patience will calm them; your charity will warm their hearts, soften them, and cause them to expand.

214. "Nothing so redounds to man's honor," wrote St. John Chrysostom to the melancholy deaconess Olympias, "as the patient endurance of bodily pain. For as patience is the first among the virtues and merits the most beautiful wreath, so this particular variety of patience is more glorious than the others. For nothing is so hard to bear as bodily illness." (*Ad Olymp.*, XVI, 2.)

## *The Suffering Soul*

215. Virtuous souls whose endeavor is directed solely towards God and salvation; souls experienced in the art of suffering, what are the secret sorrows that overwhelm you from time to time? That crash upon you with such force that even you, inured to suffering as you are, are driven to the verge of despair? They are known and intelligible to you and to those who have experienced similar trials. We find their traces in Sacred Scripture, in the lives of the saints, in the books of the mystics, and the teachers of the spiritual life have endeavored to shed light on the mystery surrounding them.

216. It may happen that, without apparent cause or occasion, in a life of joyful activity, solid calm and sweet peace in God, the soul experiences a complete change. Calmness and peace are gone; God seems to have with-

drawn; dense fogs settle all round, and Stygian darkness envelops the soul. We feel as if God had forsaken us; disinclination to work and pray, disgust, disconsolateness, diffidence, doubt and temptation cast us into an indescribable condition of spiritual aridity and barrenness, into a region of perpetual ice, in which it seems as if prayer, the spiritual sense, and charity are bound to grow numb and die.

217. Well may the soul in such pass cry out with the Psalmist: "I remembered God, and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away, my eyes prevented the watches; I was troubled, and I spoke not. . . . I was exercised, and I swept my spirit. Will God then cast off forever? or will He never be more favorable again?" (Ps. LXXVI, 4 sqq.). Or it may complain with Job: "If I go to the east, he appeareth not; if to the west, I shall not understand him. . . . But he knoweth my way, and has tried me as gold that passeth through the fire" (Job XXIII, 8 sqq.). "Who will grant me, that I might be according to the months past, ac-

cording to the days in which God kept me? When his lamp shined over my head, and I walked by his light in darkness? As I was in the days of my youth, when God was secretly in my tabernacle?" (Job XXIX, 2 sqq.).

218. What are we to do in such bitter anguish of soul? What a Christian should do whenever he suffers. Humiliate ourselves and examine whether personal guilt is not the cloud that veils God's face from us; arouse contrition and atone for our sins. Most commonly we will find this affliction has no other purpose than to preserve those who strive for perfection in humility, and to ban the danger of intellectual pride. Therefore we should pray: "If thou wilt that I be in light, be thou blessed; and if thou wilt that I be in darkness, be thou also blessed. If thou vouchsafest to comfort me, be thou highly blessed; and if thou wilt that I shall live in trouble and without all comfort, be thou likewise much blessed." (*Imitation of Christ,* III, 17.) Light and darkness, praise ye the Lord!

219. Next, it is important that we seal our

lips and cloak our grief in silence and under no circumstances permit our fellowmen to suffer because we are suffering. We must never permit our professional duties or our regular order of life to be interfered with, but by adhering to it erect a solid dam against the overflow of the bitter flood of resentment which would otherwise cause damage. At times mental or emotional distress is due solely to physical discomfort or over-exertion, and may be cured by a vigorous walk in the open air, or, better still, by a hike into the country.

220. This species of suffering, too, may be associated with the Passion of Christ and derive consolation from it. His cry: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" reveals that He, the Son of God, desired to experience the burning pain of being removed from God, as an exemplar and a comfort for those who must suffer in a similar manner. His Blessed Mother bore this anguish with Him. She had a foretaste of it during those three days when she sought her lost Son in sorrow. The saints have frequently suffered frightful and pro-

tracted agony of soul; but such afflictions, they assure us, were usually the precursors of great graces and consolations. Reason enough for us to bear them in humility and patience. "Who walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him hope in the name of the Lord, and lean upon his God" (Is. L, 10).

221. The noble Tauler describes this soul-sickness in detail. At times, he says, God-loving souls are so drunk with love and full of God that they imagine they can work the greatest miracles, and could, joyously and without suffering hurt, pass through fire, water, and a thousand swords. Then God leads them along a wild path, dark and fearsome, and leaves them to themselves. They grow so utterly confused that they know not whether they have ever been aright and whether they have a God or no, and whether they are themselves or some other; such soreness and distress oppresses them, as if the world had grown too small to permit them to live therein. Master Eckhart advises such as these: "Learn to do in times of spiritual dry-

ness precisely as you did when you had abundant consolation. As you did when you last felt God in yourself, so also do now when you miss Him, and you will surely find Him again." (Denifle, *Das geistl. Leben,* pp. 404 sqq.)

## *Petty Annoyances*

222. What of those unpleasant experiences brought upon us by the world or even by uncharitable friends of the household of the faith, when we have displeased them somehow or other, by differences of opinion or habits of thought, by the conscientious fulfilment of duty, by taking a firm attitude in religious matters? Whether it be a pin-prick or the bite of a viper, the best we can do is to classify afflictions of this sort among petty annoyances and consistently refuse, as a matter of principle, to attach any importance to them.

223. These vexations may, indeed, be quite painful, particularly when they are caused by those who, as a matter of justice, should be aligned with and support us. "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it," the Psalmist complains (Ps. LIV, 13 sq.), "but thou a man of one mind, my fa-

miliar!" "Such wounds hurt more than the stroke of a sword," declares Suso, but adds, "until one has become accustomed to them."

224. Much harm can be done by such attacks, particularly if the press broadcasts them. Certain catch-phrases have an effect similar to pressing an electric button; all the newspapers of a certain color immediately go into action. Here too, the rule should be: "Silence! Do not lose your composure! Refuse to reply unless it is absolutely necessary."

225. The more common such newspaper attacks have become, the less importance attaches to them. A sensible person will pay little heed to blatant press campaigns against a decent man. Even the most stupid reader no longer regards such clamorings as the voice of public opinion. Everybody knows that commonly such attacks are inspired by one or a few individuals, mostly weak, unprincipled persons, whose ranting is echoed by the others.

226. Frequently that sort of an attack is merely the exudation of a guilty conscience.

In such cases its aim is to provoke the victim to a counter-attack in which he will transgress the limits of self-defense. In that case the victim is in the wrong and the originator of the attack believes he has placed himself in the right. Thus Nehemias realized that his adversaries had merely planned to cause him to sin under the stress of fear, so that they might have something to upbraid him with (2 Esdr. VI, 13). Nothing is more provoking to an assailant than to spoil his game by letting him remain in the wrong and unconcernedly going your own way.

227. The Psalmist evidently drew upon his own experience when he pictured the beginnings of such feuds. A man gathers in his heart resentment and anger, ready to explode; he goes out and talks to the same purpose; next there is a whispering among many devising evil, followed by unjust charges and finally by a violent attack, in which many inflict injury upon him whose bread they have eaten (Ps. XL, 7 sqq). Thereupon "they surround [their victim] like bees and they burn

like fire among thorns" (Ps. CXVII, 12).

228. It is by no means an easy task to maintain one's composure under such attacks. Yet it is the only sensible thing. It will not do to draw the sword when "the arrows of children" are flying (Ps. LXIII, 8); one should rather hold with the Psalmist: "I, as a deaf man, heard not; and as a dumb man not opening his mouth; and I became as a man that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth" (Ps. XXXVII, 14 sq.). A man who acts in this manner confuses his enemies, who slink away leaving no trace, like Satan in the Book of Job.

229. "Every worth-while man," writes Hilty, "must be counted among the evil-doers at least once in his life." To remain wholly unmolested would not be a good sign. Nor would it be wholesome. Many a man would be pampered by such immunity. Attack and censure harden the soul as a cold bath hardens the body; they train one to self-reliance, to independence, to inner freedom; they disgust one, too, with human praise.

230. It is wise not to attach undue weight to such affronts. It is even wiser to make the best possible use of them for one's own good. Particularly should one make them the occasion of a serious self-scrutiny, to ascertain whether one may be at fault, even though only through neglect or lack of prudence. If the examination exonerates you, you may apply to yourself the saying of St. Gregory: "If you have a witness for your deeds in Heaven, and another witness in your own heart, let the fools outside say what they will." But if one finds oneself to have been at fault, one should be grateful to the critics.

231. Our opponents are eager to humiliate us. We should cross their plans by humiliating ourselves. "When they were troublesome to me," says the Psalmist (Ps. XXXIV, 13), "I was clothed with haircloth. I humbled my soul with fasting and turned my prayer into my bosom." Tauler offers this counsel for such occasions: "Retire into thine inner self and esteem thyself as nothing more thoroughly than any one else could do." Thus you will

remain honorable and will not even forfeit your reputation; a dignified bearing under adversity enforces respect.

232. Do not look upon the evil intention of those who persecute you, but rather upon the good which God, who permits them to do so, has in view. Once upon a time the love of the Eternal Father was concealed under the hatred of the Jews. Jesus looked upon the love, not upon the hatred. Since God's love coöperates in all the trials that befall us, they are all worthy of love, more especially those in which we are made the victims of ill-treatment; for it was thus that Christ suffered on earth.

233. One of the early hermits of the desert was accustomed, when he heard someone had spoken ill of him, to seek him out and offer him a present. When St. Francis of Sales met a man who openly expressed his hatred of him, he said: "Even though you do not love me, I love you; and if you were to tear out one of my eyes, I would still look kindly at you with the other."

234. There is a goodly measure of wisdom in the thoughts suggested in the *Imitation of Christ:* "What be words but words? They fly in the air, but they hurt not a stone on the ground. Why is it that so little a thing goeth so nigh thy heart, but that thou art yet carnal, and heedest to please men more than thou shouldst? Hear my words, and thou shalt not need to care for the words of ten thousand men." (III, 46.)

## *Wisdom Gathered from Suffering*

235. The wisdom gained from suffering is a part of the philosophy of life,—an important and indispensable part. To know how to suffer is to know how to live. The significance of any trial in your life depends upon yourself and your own free will. In itself suffering is neither an evil nor a good thing, neither friend nor foe. It will be for you what you make of it. To begin with, it is merely raw material which you must work up morally, and you have it in your power to make of it a poison or a medicine, destructive dynamite or useful energy.

236. As the soul fashions the body, so it also fashions sorrow. It marks suffering with its own brand and impresses character and value upon it. The particular form of suffering is of little significance, but the manner how we suffer is all-important; and this precisely is

determined by the will. Suffering is, of itself, not a good; but the will can make a good of it; nor is it necessarily an evil, but an evil or a weak will can make it that.

237. Suffering may literally devastate a man's life. It may harden and embitter the soul, uproot faith, break the will, nay, even impel to vice, particularly to alcoholism. But that is not the fault of suffering. Suffering does not cause these moral weaknesses; it merely brings them out into the open. The mystic Ruysbroek says truly: "If a man grows impatient in suffering, it is not suffering that brings on malice, but it merely discloses the impatience which was concealed in him. What is happening to him is what happens to a silver-coated copper penny: it seems to be pure silver until it is put in the fire, when it shows itself as copper. But it is not the fire that makes the penny a copper penny; the fire merely discloses the fact that under the semblance of silver the penny was copper all along." (Denifle, *op. cit.*, 420.)

238. St. Augustine demonstrates the same

truth thus: "As in the same fire gold glitters while dross grows dull; as on the same threshing floor the straw is crumpled while the grain is cleansed; and as the yeast of oil does not mingle with the oil, although crushed by the same press,—so one and the same fate tries, purifies, and refines the good, whereas it damns, destroys, and disperses the wicked. Hence it is that under the same visitation the wicked curse and revile God, whereas the virtuous invoke and praise Him. Such is the importance, not of the quality of suffering, but of the quality of the sufferer. Air passes over offal and disperses horrible stenches; it passes over a jar of ointment and carries pleasing perfume." (*De Civ. Dei,* I, 8.)

239. Misfortune and sorrow at first block our path and provoke us to resistance, which is wholly permissible and may even be a duty. But even resistance has its limits. A man rushing blindly against an unavoidable fate will simply break his own neck. A man endeavoring to safeguard his life against all affliction will only make of himself a laughing-stock.

Self-defense is advisable; but to waste one's strength in fretful contradiction and resistance is folly. Reason commands resignation and patience in such instances, and revelation ennobles and raises these virtues to higher rank.

240. Resignation and patience are words that may be misunderstood. They do not mean that one should surrender unconditionally to fate and merely tolerate and endure what one cannot alter or guard against. Such purely passive conduct could not be designated as a virtue. Christian patience is not passive, but active; not a surrender of the will, but an energetic, nay heroic, exercise of the will, a voluntary acceptance of sorrow and pain.

241. Is it possible for man to suffer of his own free will, seeing that suffering is not a good in itself and can readily become a thing of evil? It is not a question of whether he suffers of his own will, but whether he wills what God wills, who sends him the affliction for his own benefit, and who always sends

with it His assistance and comfort. To will what God wills is the essence of patience; therein lies its victorious, superhuman power; therein, its liberating and soothing effect. "Do you not feel," St. Magdalen of Pazzi used to ask, "what infinite sweetness lies in the phrase, 'the will of God?' "

242. Impatient and obstinate resistance to suffering fetters the will and makes man a prisoner and slave. To will what God wills is the noblest exercise of free will. To will in misfortune what God wills sets the will free in respect to suffering and makes it independent of it. Patience is the re-acquisition of interior freedom. Thus liberated a man can once again will to suffer,—not because suffering is an evil, but because it has been willed and sent by God. Now he can meet affliction as a free agent, and extend to it the greeting which Ruysbroek has taught us: "Welcome, my dear, my only faithful friend! I would not have expected you, nor waited for you; I bow to you and greet you most humbly." (Denifle, *op. cit.*, p. 182.)

243. To will what God wills is humble simplicity and dignified grandeur of spirit; it is the simplest and most generous attitude of mind and direction of will, particularly in time of sorrow. Therefore, the Saviour taught us to pray on the Mount of Olives: "Not my will be done, but thine!" And therefore He taught us to say: "The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Jno. XVI, 11). Thus the soul enters into the will of God, even unto its own utter self-immolation therein. This thought is voiced by the Saviour thus: "He that shall lose his life for me, shall find it" (Matt. X, 39). Apparently such a one loses his soul by complete subjection to the will of God; in reality he saves and preserves it. "In your patience you shall possess your souls," says Jesus Christ (Lk. XXI, 19.).

244. Patience is the good sail of fairy-lore, which sets itself to catch favorable winds and even takes advantage of contrary storms. It supplies ballast for the ship, gives it the proper draught, and cuts a clean, smooth path

across the stormy sea; whilst on the other hand the rolling and plunging of impatience merely serves to throw the ship off its course and unnecessarily churns up water and mud.

245. Everyone agrees that we should meet suffering with patience, that this is more reasonable and more noble than to indulge in impatient remonstrances and outbursts of temper, or unmanly whining. But the idea of enduring suffering joyfully will seem to many an exaggerated, an unnatural, a harebrained demand. True, there is no commandment obliging us to suffer joyously. Duty merely requires that we bear our burden of affliction according to the example set by Jesus Christ, with pious patience and resignation. If one complies with this duty and advances oneself in the Christian art of suffering, with the aid of the strength and consolation of religion, joy will come of itself. It will flash momentarily, lightning-like, at first as if the sun shone for a second from behind a cloud of suffering; ere long its light will linger a bit; and finally it will unfold it-

self like the blue canopy of the sky over many bitter days, nay, over an entire life of suffering.

246. Joy is not so much a duty as a reward of the afflicted. This wonderful blossom and sweet fruit will grow from the wild shoot of suffering as soon as it is transplanted into the blessed garden of religion, tenderly cared for, and moistened by heavenly dew. Eduard von Hartmann confesses: "The elevation of religious sentiment in devotion and edification is capable of imparting so great a measure of happiness as to raise one above all earthly suffering." (*Philosophie des Unbewussten,* 5th ed., p. 695.)

247. The domestication of the wild shoot of suffering is a process starting from within by purification and sanctification of the intention, by prayer and sacrifice, by reception of the Sacraments, by confidence in the help of God and a very great reward in Heaven (Matt. V, 12), but above all by charity. Charity, while studiously ignoring all secondary causes, which annoy the average man all too

easily, traces all afflictions back to God and recognizes in them dispensations and visitations coming from a kind Father. Charity traces all sufferings to God and leads them all back to Him by the intention to suffer in conformity with His will and in His honor. Thus a gleaming ray of faith in God, of love of God, of nearness to God, brightens even the darkest night of suffering.

248. Suffering, borne in the Christian spirit, involves prayer, and by that very fact is transfigured. To be able to pray in time of need is a source of consolation and strength. Pity the man who can no longer pray, who is as a deaf-mute so far as God is concerned, and who must hide his pain in his own heart. Ordinarily it is not well for anyone in deep affliction to commune with himself alone; and frequently this practice leads to hallucinations. To converse with others is at times beneficial, at times useless; but to converse with God is always a comfort and a means of strength. "Surely no prayer is more readily answered by God than that for strength and persever-

ance in suffering." (A. M. Weiss, *Lebensweisheit,* p. 356.) There is great wisdom in the simple admonition of the Apostle: "Is any of you sad? Let him pray." (Jas. V, 13.)

249. Severe affliction may make prayer difficult. Suso says that if a man is in such sore straits that he can be conscious only of woe and suffering, then his affliction itself prays fervently to God and its bitterness is converted into sweet orison. Similarly, St. Francis de Sales: "If you cannot recite lengthy prayers, see to it that your ailments themselves be converted into prayer, by offering them to Him who so dearly loved our misery as to have wound it into a garland of honor for Himself on the day of His espousal, as the Canticle of Canticles has it." If your anguish is so extreme that you cannot find words to express it, let your silence cry to Heaven.

250. The Church is animated by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. He has taught her the art of consolation and equipped her with innumerable means of consoling the afflicted. The ecclesiastical year, the high feasts of the

Church, her liturgical services, contain an inexhaustible treasure of consolation. Her great festivals ever and again bring fulfilment of the prophecy: "It shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweetness, and the hills shall flow with milk: and waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda: and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the torrent of thorns." (Joel III, 18.)

251. The Temple was the Israelites' asylum of refuge. Therefore the Psalmist asks that he may be allowed to dwell in the house of the Lord, because he feels the Lord has protected him in His hidden tabernacle against evil, and has "exalted him upon a rock" (Ps. XXVI, 4 sqq.); because he feels himself "hidden in the secret of the face of the Lord from the disturbance of men" (Ps. XXX, 20 sq.). In an immeasurably higher sense the Christian's house of God is a place of refuge for him, for in it he finds personally present, though veiled, Him who has redeemed the world by suffering, and who calls unto Himself all that

are burdened and offers to refresh them (Matt. XI, 28). Here we may enter with our oblation of suffering into the Saviour's sacrifice, and even in greatest distress exultingly draw waters of joy out of the Saviour's fountains (Is. XII, 3).

252. "And you are sad?" the risen Saviour sympathetically asks the disciples on the way to Emmaus. And having uncovered the wound of their heart, he applies as first-aid treatment the consolation of Holy Writ. After their hearts had grown warm, He gave to them the best medicine He had, namely, Himself in the form of the Eucharistic Bread (Lk. XXIV, 13 sqq.). That is and ever will be the best food, the sweetest refreshment, the most effective comfort for souls wounded by grief.

253. The supreme wisdom of suffering is to suffer for love, and to learn love from suffering; to suffer for love of God and of Christ and to learn to love from one's suffering, to cause love for others to flow therefrom. Affliction causes noble hearts to expand, and

ignoble hearts to contract and shrivel up. Un-Christian suffering makes one selfish and uncharitable, and even stifles natural compassion. Christian suffering, on the contrary, produces compassion and charity.

254. It is uncanny how frequently misfortune and distress contract and harden the human heart, make it unfriendly, sulky, presumptuous. That must not be tolerated. Grievous personal suffering must not dull understanding for that of our neighbor, but rather refine it and instil deep compassion for others whose burden is as heavy as our own, if not more so, and a lasting impulse to aid and comfort them, to prepare balm for their hurts out of the anguish of our own hearts.

255. The best expression of gratitude towards God for the rich consolation which He imparts to us in suffering is to let its overflow refresh others who are in affliction. St. Paul urges this duty upon us in the glorious words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth

us in all our tribulation; that we also may be able to comfort them who are in all distress, by the exhortation wherewith we also are exhorted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound. Now whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation; or whether we be exhorted, it is for your exhortation and salvation, which worketh the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer. That our hope for you may be steadfast: knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation" (2 Cor. I, 3 sqq.). This is true Christian charity; it has all things in common, sorrow as well as consolation.

256. If ever your woe is abysmally deep, and it seems nothing can console you, go out and succor someone who is in misery and need. You will find immediate relaxation of the tension under which you suffer, and you will discover that your own distress will not

render you incapable, but rather more competent, to console others.

257. Consolation is a great art, which is taught only by suffering and by love. A certain type of consolers is characterized for all time in the friends of holy Job. He himself calls them "troublesome comforters," full of "windy words," whose lips are moved by compassion, whereas their soul is callous (Job. XVI, 1 sq.). As long as they remained silent out of respect for his sufferings, all was well; but when they began to talk, they merely irritated and provoked him; for they fell upon him as uncharitable, self-righteous, stern representatives of justice and weighed his complaints on their apothecary's scale. Their tribe has not yet become extinct, and there are still plenty of sorry comforters who hold themselves far superior to the victim of suffering and treat burning anguish of soul with cold, heartless words and become extremely impatient if the victim does not immediately submit.

258. The first requisite of a good comforter is respect and reverence for the victim of affliction. The next is a willingness to enter cordially into his distress and to commend it to God as if it were his own. There is no need of many words. Jesus and Mary consoled each other under the cross by their silence and glances. At times to sorrow with the sorrowing offers the greatest comfort, such as Jesus showed when He wept with Mary of Bethany. If it is advisable to speak, certainly not only the lips and the brain should do so, but also the soul, drawing the words from the depths of love. They need not necessarily always be sweet and tender words; a rough, harsh word may be of greater benefit when there is need of rousing a weakened will to action.

259. Obtain consolation for yourself by consoling others. Instead of brooding constantly on your own misfortunes, turn your eyes to the afflictions of others. Instead of looking upon your own burden as unbearable, add to it the burdens of others. Instead of whining in self-pity, pity those who are more sorely

afflicted than yourself; instead of begging for consolation, console others. You will be surprised at the result. In taking a load from the shoulders of your fellow-man, you have been relieved of your own. By setting out to nurse one who is sick, you have healed the wound of your own heart. By comforting the afflicted, you have refreshed your own soul. By alleviating the pain of another, you have removed the sharp edge of your own. You intended to give and you received. In your case the beautiful prophecy was fulfilled: "When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise" (Is. LVIII, 8, 10 sq.).

*Our Companions in Suffering in the Beyond*

260. Fénelon writes: "Suffering is a purgatory of mercy in this world. But who suffers as do those souls whom God purifies in the other world? Who suffers as they suffer, without moving under the hand of God, without seeking surcease of pain, without impatience, without striving to shorten the time of visitation, with a peaceful love increasing day by day, with a pure joy in the midst of pain, and, finally, with a humility and simplicity which even in the midst of suffering do not permit the thought that something is being offered to God? Let us strive to introduce this purgatory into our world, just as we found hospitals."

261. Purgatory or hell? There are many who convert suffering into a hell by sullen rage and violent obstinacy, by cursing and blaspheming. It is thus that the damned suffer, and curses and blasphemies are their

hymns. It would surely seem better for us to make of our suffering a purgatory, by imitating the Poor Souls in their silent, noble, joyous endurance.

262. "In Purgatory peace and pain are wonderfully blended. The souls accept all suffering from the hand of God. Resistance of the will is completely excluded. Happy he who could suffer thus in simple peace, with complete submission, without the slightest resistance. Nothing shortens suffering more than to accept it in this spirit" (Fénelon).

263. The Poor Souls in Purgatory are excellent companions for those who know how to commune with them; they have an understanding and a sympathy rare among the living. It pays to attach oneself to them, to learn from them, to quiet one's own soul by the contemplation of their cheerful submission.

264. What faith tells us regarding them and their sufferings brings them closer to us in times of distress than even the saints in Heaven, who, indeed, also have suffered, but are now removed from possible contact with

pain. In contemplating Purgatory we begin to realize how little cause we have for complaint. Not only are our sufferings much lighter in comparison with theirs—Fénelon well says sufferings on earth are a purgatory of mercy, whereas those beyond the grave are a purgatory of justice;—but we have this further advantage over the Poor Souls that it is in our power to merit an eternal reward by our sufferings. How happy they would be if they could but suffer as we can; but they live in that night in which no man can labor. (Cfr. Keppler, *The Poor Souls in Purgatory,* Herder.)

265. Still more effective and valuable relations between the Poor Souls and those suffering on earth are established by Christian faith and charity. Not only can the Poor Souls comfort us, but we can comfort them, and besides consolation, we can give them effective assistance. Our sufferings in particular may be applied to them as precious gifts of love. With our sufferings we can lighten and shorten theirs; out of the bitterness we endure

we can prepare for them that refreshing draught for which they thirst.

266. This beautiful possibility is based upon the Communion of Saints and the law of vicarious atonement, which operates throughout the entire economy of salvation. A ray of light falls into the darkness of suffering when we know that grief can be distilled into love; when we have full assurance that, by an act of sacrificial love, our sufferings can bring relief and refreshment to the Poor Souls, can give redemption and consolation to others,—to our own, our dear ones, those whom we cannot forget and the loss of whom still burns as an open wound in our soul!

267. If you find it hard to shoulder the yoke of suffering gracefully, and stare disconsolately into the gloom, I would recommend to you a little pilgrimage to Purgatory. As you enter this realm of suffering, subdued, transfigured by peace, interwoven with joy, your soul will be enfolded by a restful silence, in which even violent pain learns to seal its lips and to control itself. A comparison with

the pains of Purgatory will reduce your own affliction to its proper proportions. The saintly cheerfulness of these holy souls is balm for the wounded heart. It recalls the purpose of suffering, namely, purification, and reminds us that we are so fortunately situated as to be able to do good here on earth in spite of our sufferings, yea, to do good by means of our sufferings. One gains comfort from giving comfort, aid from rendering aid, and both parties are helped thereby. Enriched by the gratitude of those noble souls, man returns to mortal life, vastly relieved and greatly strengthened.

## *The Heights of Thabor*

268. Suffering was inducted into the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Thabor, as we know from the Gospel. Specific mention is made of the Saviour's death in the marvellous conversation of Our Lord with Moses and Elias (Lk. IX, 31). Thus suffering was transfigured on Thabor's heights, and since that time suffering is capable of being transfigured also in us. A reflection of the glory of Thabor rests on the sufferings of the saints.

269. Christianity presented to the world the first spectacle of joyful, jubilant, exulting pain. In those soul-stirring songs of joy, chanted by woe, there is not one false note, no undertone of morbid exaltation, of nervous over-stimulation or of boastfulness; they are as pure and clear as a bell, coming from healthy, noble, humble souls.

270. The Canticle of Canticles of pain is in-

toned by St. Stephen, the Proto-Martyr, in his death-song: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts VII, 55). The Apostles join in the chant, for it is written that, after having been scourged, they "went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts V, 41). St. Paul, who passed through so many trials, adds his voice to the jubilant chorus: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. VII, 4).

271. This chant is taken up by a choir of many voices, those of the holy martyrs. They are the brilliant phalanx whose function it is to lead the Church Militant in the battle of suffering. There is a sweeping, inspiring, kindling power in the example of suffering which they have set. They are the leaders of innumerable hosts of heroic sufferers, who throughout the centuries have trained, steeled, and enthused themselves by their example.

272. In the acts of the early martyrs the de-

scription of bloody and inhuman tortures is interwoven with uplifting traits of suffering borne in happiness and of death embraced with rejoicing. The community at Smyrna writes to that of Philomelium concerning the martyrdom of St. Polycarp and his companions: "The blows of scourges, flames and the instruments of torture seemed pleasing and lovely, and one could not hear even a sigh as blood flowed from both sides, when the intestines could be seen in the opened bodies, and even the populace wept at the sight of such cruelties. For the Lord, the custodian and preserver of their souls, conversed with them." Eusebius reports that during the persecution under Diocletian, men and women were seized by an indescribable divine joy which impelled them to cast themselves into the fire. St. Andrew in a spirited hymn welcomes the cross on which he is to be executed: "O blessed Cross, that hast received most beautiful radiance from the body of Christ; that I have so often longed for; that I have sighed for throughout many nights; take me

away from men and bring me to my Master, that through thee He may receive me, who through thee redeemed me."

273. St. Augustine writes: "Crispina rejoiced when she was seized, led before the judge, thrown into prison, led before the judge again laden with chains, tried, and condemned; she was filled with great joy over each indignity and each pain, and, while the godless considered her miserable, she joined in the joyful chant of the Angels." He reports of St. Pionius that his countenance, usually pale, glowed with joy when he was led away to prison.

274. St. Dorothy appeared exceedingly happy under torture, so that the judge asked her: "Why do you conceal your pain under the mask of a deceitful countenance?" She replied: "I am not deceiving you. Never in my life have I been as glad as I am now." St. Maximus declared: "The tortures which you inflict refresh me, the blows are as a balm; the more the body suffers for Christ, the more

the soul grows in strength and life." Hanging on the cross, St. Carpus, Bishop of Pergamon, smiled. In amazement, bystanders asked him why. He replied: "I saw the glory of the Lord and I rejoiced."

275. Joy in suffering, increased to a passionate desire, is by no means confined to the holy martyrs; it is rather a distinguishing characteristic of all great saints. As St. Angela expresses it, "they go out seeking pain as robbers seek prey and loot; they become impatient if they are free from trials for any length of time, or if they enjoy abundant consolations. A burning impulse to become like unto Jesus, to imitate His sufferings, enkindles in them an ever new desire for suffering. Therefore, they have a great veneration for suffering and value it more highly than the gift of miracles or ecstasies. They love it as their very life, and would rather not live than live without suffering." St. Teresa said: "To suffer or to die." St. Magdalen of Pazzi: "Not to die, but to suffer." St. Francis Regis: "I confess, life

would be unbearable for me if I could not suffer for Christ; suffering is my only consolation on earth."

276. St. Bernard adds to the words of the Psalm, "I am with him in tribulation" (Ps. XV, 15), the petition: "Lord, give me tribulation, that thou mayest always be with me." St. Gertrude says beautifully: "If God finds nothing in a man that makes him worthy of His grace and presence, He sends him bodily and spiritual sufferings and tribulations, thus providing an occasion to remain with him according to the words of Scripture: 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart,' (Ps. XXXIII, 19), and, 'I am with him in tribulation.'"

277. According to St. Catherine of Siena, self-love adds grief to sickness, persecution, disconsolateness and great losses, and brings on resentment and even injustice and harshness towards others. Refreshing itself with the blood of the Redeemer, the soul becomes free from selfishness; once this vice is dead, the soul no longer feels pain, for it is the obstrep-

erous will which prepares woe for us in suffering and makes pain painful. If self-will is overcome and the divine will placed in control, suffering becomes enjoyment.

278. St. Vincent Ferrer, when suffering severe pain, was accustomed to thank God for having permitted him to partake of the chalice of His Son. St. John of Avila said: One exclamation "Praised be God," uttered in time of affliction, outweighs a thousand times the "Thank God" uttered in days of well-being. St. John Chrysostom wrote: "Have you suffered evil? If you but will, it shall not be an evil. Thank God, and the evil will be converted into good."

279. St. John of the Cross: "Be not astonished at my great love for suffering. While I was imprisoned in Toledo, God permitted me to understand its meritoriousness and value." St. Louis, King of France, during his crusade fell into captivity among the Turks. Regarding it he said to the King of England: "I thank God for this with my whole heart and rejoice more over the patience He imparted

to me at that time, than I would rejoice had I conquered the whole world."

280. The Ven. Johanna of the Cross was ever cheerful and amiable in her terrible sicknesses. She compared herself to a musical instrument in the hands of God; when pain was severe, it seemed to her as if a friendly voice spoke to her: "Sister, sing to the Lord with the harp of the cross; the Lord has table-companions everywhere, but not many care to share His suffering on the cross."

281. St. Vincent de Paul, who was frequently ill, used to say: "If we knew what a great treasure lies concealed in our sicknesses, we would accept them with the same deep gratitude with which we receive the greatest benefits." Once when his Congregation had sustained a severe loss he wrote: "When I saw that for some time past everything was going on so well with us, I began to dread the consequences of this period of calm, since God is accustomed to try His servants with adversities. But blessed be the divine good-

ness which deemed us worthy of the grace of being visited by so great a loss."

282. St. Teresa: "Love consists chiefly in the patient endurance of all vicissitudes of life. Whoever loves, finds his delight in sufferings and even derives new strength from them." "Those who attain to perfection never ask God to liberate them from tribulations and trials; for they desire them, and value them as highly as the children of the world esteem gold and jewels. They know it is easy to enrich themselves, particularly in times of tribulation and temptation."

283. St. Francis de Sales says: "A heart which cordially loves Jesus Crucified, also loves His pain and anguish, His humiliation and derision, His hunger and thirst, the injustice He suffered; it rejoices if it has the grace to taste aught of them!" And again: "If you look at the staff which Moses cast down before Pharaoh as it lies on the ground, you will see a terrifying serpent; but if you look at it in the hand of

Moses, it is a miraculous wand, with which he works the most remarkable signs." The same applies to tribulations: "If you consider them in themselves, they may well frighten you; but in the hand of God they are lovely and sources of bliss."

284. Who would deny that the example of suffering given by the saints has been and is a true blessing, a firm support, by the aid of which many despondent and despairing sufferers have raised themselves up? We have probably all had experiences similar to that of a servant of King Saint Stephen. He was well nigh overcome by bitter cold one winter when accompanying the King on his visits of mercy to the huts of the poor and sick, until it occurred to him to step into the footprints of the King in the deep snow; from that moment, it is said, he began to feel so warm and cheerful that he felt the cold no longer and was able to follow his lord happily. So, too, it will become easier for us to carry our burdens if we follow in the footsteps of the saints.

285. But is it possible for ordinary mortals to follow the saints all the way up to Thabor, the mountain of transfiguration and of suffering? Even if we fail to follow them all the way, it is still beneficial to look up to them, even as wanderers, when half-way up the mountain, derive courage and strength from the sight of their companions on the highest peaks ahead. We may not reach the greatest heights, but if we honestly strive to climb out of the lowlands of suffering, we shall be refreshed as by an hour on Thabor, whenever we realize the blessing of affliction and divine consolation; when the hope of Heaven brightens our vision, becoming almost a blissful certainty; and when, with the Apostle, we understand clearly that "the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come" (Rom. VIII, 18). These are indeed transient hours, but their effect and their brilliance endure long in the soul, just as the countenance of Moses still glowed when he came down from the mountain. "Blessed is the man whose help is from thee;

in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears, in the place which he has set, . . . journeying from virtue to virtue" (Ps. LXXXIII, 6 sqq.).

## *The Sorrow of Death*

286. Death and grief are related to each other. They are of the same descent and nature. Death is the climax of sorrow and its consummation. Grief is the beginning and the precursor of death. In every affliction the germ of death lies concealed. Only when that germ is neutralized and eliminated, can grief give birth to life; if it remains in grief, it causes death. "The sorrow of the world," says the Apostle, "worketh death" (2 Cor. VII, 10).

287. Death never appears on the stage of life except in the company of a retinue, numerous or small, of grief and pain. He is a king, and his followers constitute his court of dark majesty. A marked bitterness and harshness is commonly attached to sorrow in the immediate vicinity of death. It is indeed deathly sorrow which lays its cold, clammy

hands on one's heart and threatens life. We experience this sensation at the death of those near and dear to us, and we shall experience it again at our own demise.

288. Death, particularly the sudden death of someone near and dear to us, affects us as a bolt of lightning; it casts us down and renders us helpless. We feel as though the thread of our own life had been severed, as though our own heart was broken. At one blow, our life seems to have lost its meaning and support, and we seem unable to live without him, whose life was so thoroughly interwoven with ours, whose heart beat in unison with our own. Thus Jacob, when he saw his son's bloody garment, had but one thought, namely: "I will go down to my son into hades, sorrowing" (Gen. XXXVII, 35). And David mourned at the death of his son Absalom, who had caused him so much grief: "My son Absalom, Absalom my son: would to God that I might die for thee, Absalom my son!" (2 Kings XVIII, 33.)

289. St. Augustine thus pictures the con-

dition of his soul brought on by the death of a dear friend: "With this affliction my whole heart was darkened, and whatsoever I beheld had the face of death. My country became a punishment to me, my father's house an extreme misery, and all that which I was wont to share with him, was converted into a vast kind of torment, now that I was without him. In every place mine eyes would look for him, but found him not, and I hated all things because they told me no news of him. Neither could they say any more, 'Behold, he cometh,' as they did when he was absent, being alive. I became unto myself but an enigma . . . Only tears were delightful to me, and they succeeded to the place which my friend was wont to hold in the dearest parts of my affection." (*Conf.*, IV, 4.)

290. At times this grief does not attain its greatest intensity at the moment of the dear one's death. The deceased is still among us, if only according to the body. He still belongs to the family. Only instead of an ordinary member, he has become an honored

guest, akin to a higher being from another world, whom one approaches with veneration and in whose presence one dares not speak above a whisper. He is still present, and as yet we may visit him, and the impressive features, seemingly cast in bronze, and the sealed lips tell us much about the finished struggle of life and suffering. Indeed, such a visit arouses the vision of something like a resurrection to temporal life; to such an extent do awakening memories quicken the figure and the earthly sojourn of him who has passed away. This is the last sadly beautiful visit between yourself and him. For they come and carry away the coffin, and now the house and the heart grow uncannily lonesome and empty, and the coldness of death enfolds us, chilling our very marrow.

291. If one is not successful in vanquishing death, which lurks in this grief and in quickening sorrow with life, then, indeed, the life both of soul and body is threatened. It not infrequently happens that the death of one person causes that of another. It is here that

the power of suffering to serve as consolation must be proven; if it passes this test, it is genuine and valuable. The comfort fashioned by a world without religion, without God, without belief or hope in a hereafter, has no place in a home visited by death; its influence there is only superficial and irritating. Death scorns such comfort, and the soul, sorrowful unto death, is vexed and pained by it.

292. No sorrow needs more to be lifted out of the abyss of death, out of mould and decay, into the lightsome realms of faith, sacrifice, prayer, and divine service, than the sorrow caused by death. To do this is the sense and purpose of the burial services into which the Church pours the fullness of her consoling power, the lightsome beauty of her faith and hope, and the full warmth of her motherly love. Under the influence of these, sorrow is transfigured, soothed, called to action, to sacrifice, to the performance of good works.

293. In this higher region the union which death has dissolved, is immediately reëstablished, new in spirit, in the Holy Ghost, in

the Communion of Saints—a more cordial, holy, true and lasting union than that of physical proximity. Now contact is reëstablished, not only by means of the frail threads of memories and emotions, but of that strong cable, which carries power-currents of love, of aid, of redemption to our dear ones beyond the grave. Thus love, and with it life, is infused into the sorrow caused by death, and death is overcome.

294. The most effective and sweetest consolation in this, as in other great sorrows, is attachment to the Saviour. This is easy to attain, for Jesus, too, shared in, healed and sanctified sorrow for the dead, as is evident from the Biblical report of the raising of Lazarus (Jno. XI). To Martha, grieving, He said: "Thy brother shall rise again; I am the resurrection and the life." When he saw Mary weeping, He groaned in spirit, and troubled Himself, and wept. And He said unto her: Did I not say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God? Jesus understands this grief. He, Himself, has put bene-

diction and grace into these tears, has infused words of eternal life into this sorrow, and He causes the glory of God to spread a radiant glow over coffin and grave.

295. Sorrow at death is the greatest of all sorrows, and therefore a splendid teacher. Its lesson is brief, terse, impressive. *"Memento mori!* Think of dying!" It teaches the art of dying, of which Seneca said: "Dying, too, is one of the duties of life; throughout the whole of life one must learn to live; and what possibly astonishes thee even more: throughout the whole of life one must also learn how to die." There is more wisdom in this than in Goethe's motto: *"Memento vivere!* Think of living!" This and *"Memento mori"* belong together; joined together they form the correct rule of life.

296. Formerly people gladly attended the school of dying. "Ars Moriendi," the art of dying, in many redactions, was a favorite book of the Catholic Middle Ages. It was a popular custom to prepare betimes one's own coffin, shroud and pall. St. Boniface, before

beginning his last mission journey to the Frisians, which ended in his martyrdom, requested that not only several books be sent him, but also the linen in which his body was to be enshrouded.

297. With the refinement of culture, the secularization of life, and increasing superficiality, the thought of death is dropped out of habitual circulation. The worldly-minded develop amazing skill in closing heart and mind to it and in evading it by a great variety of devices. But that is a foolish policy, which is not only far from admirable, but also fails to attain the desired aim. It does not dispel the fear of death.

298. The flight from death increases the fear of death. What one does not dare to face, overshadows one's entire life, like a fearful premonition,—particularly those hours during which one is especially eager to enjoy oneself. Rejected by day, these thoughts come back at night, when one cannot pretend not to be at home, and insist upon a hearing, and

trouble and harass the soul all the more.

299. Playing with the thought of death is no better than trying to forget it. We find this tendency in the literature and art of an unwholesome superculture, in the form of a sentimental luxuriating in imaginary visions of death, full of *Weltschmerz,* though void of moral seriousness. Such trifling is enervating and weakening. It is still worse if art abuses the horrors of death for the sole purpose of providing thrills.

300. Cardinal Bellarmine says in the introduction to his book on "The Art of Dying": "When I had pondered a long time why so few men strive to learn the art of dying a happy death, which all should know better than any other, I could find no other reason than the truth spoken by the Preacher: 'The number of fools can not be counted.' "

301. One of our ultra-modern poets says: "Why do you speak of dying?" Answer: "Is there any sensible man who thinks of aught else while he is enjoying himself?" A pithy

proverb says: "Who thinks of death, begins to live."

302. Dying is the greatest deed of life.

> "For each of us the greatest deed is dying;
> For each the sternest fight is in complying
> With death's grim call; a crown of lasting beauty
> Awaits the soul that well performs this duty."
>
> (A. M. Weiss, O. P.)

Therefore, reason demands that we approach this great finale of life on earth, not like a somnambulist, staggering with closed eyes, or dancing with grotesque steps like a comedian, but with open eyes, erect head, and a firm step. The more firmly we fix our vision on death, the more the fear of it vanishes.

303. Preparedness for death does not make men tired of living, disinclined to work, or unhappy. On the contrary, it conquers the fear of death and frees the heart from that uncanny oppression which never permits of unalloyed joy. It is a spur to work and an incentive to make the best possible use of the short span of valuable time allotted us to labor. It introduces order, clearness, purposeful am-

bition into living, and restfulness and peace into dying.

304. All the power of his intellect and will cannot enable man to wrest life and wisdom from death. That cannot be done without the aid of religion,—the grace of Him who alone is able to say: "I am the resurrection and the life," who conquered death by dying and by His death gave us life. Whoever rejects Him, is cruel toward himself. The admonition of the Prophet applies to all: "Give ye glory to the Lord your God, before it be dark and your feet stumble upon the dark mountains; you shall look for light, and he will turn it into the shadow of death and into darkness" (Jer. XIII, 16). Give ye glory to God also, and especially in tribulation, in sickness and suffering, in the sadness of death and the anguish of dying. Then will the beautiful prophecy be fulfilled in you: They "shall come into Sion singing praises, and joy everlasting shall be upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning shall flee away. I, I myself will comfort you" (Is. LI, 11 sq.).

305. As soon as we familiarize ourselves with the thought of death, it renders us such good service, restrains us from so many acts of folly, that it gradually becomes a good friend and companion, whose opinion we gladly ask, whom we willingly consult, nay learn to regard as a comforter in distress. The sorrow caused by death is the deepest of all sorrows, but it is also the last, the end of life's misery and the door to a better future. That is our great comfort in the sorrow caused by death. Thus the believing soul will frequently meditate on death and gain new courage in tribulation.

306. And when death finally comes, its advent may still be painful and fearful enough by reason of the suffering and anguish that accompany it. But it does not come to the Christian as an unknown intruder, as a cruel enemy, as a gruesome spook, but as an old acquaintance and a good friend, announcing that the day's work is done and calling the worker to his Father's house, where there are many mansions and the Saviour has prepared

a place for each one of us (Jno. XIV, 2 sq.).

307. St. Francis of Assisi, several days before his death, inquired of his physician what he thought of his illness. The latter answered evasively: "With the help of God all will be well." Whereupon the sick man said cheerfully: "Be frank with me; I do not fear the truth." Then the physician replied: "Father, your illness is incurable." When the Saint heard these words, he stretched out his arms and cried with great joy: "Welcome, Brother Death!" and to his brethren he said: "Praised be God because of our Brother Death, whom no living man can escape; praise and bless my Lord, give thanks and serve Him all ye creatures in great humility." And he composed the last lines of his famous Canticle of the Sun, which read:

Praised be my Lord for our brother, the death
of the body,
From which no man escapeth.
Woe to him who dieth in mortal sin.
Blessed are they who die in thy holy will,
For the second death shall have no power to do
them harm.

## *Conclusion*

"And you are sad?" There was so much tender compassion and so much comfort in this question addressed by Our Saviour to the disciples journeying to Emmaus that their hearts were moved, and they confided their great sorrow to Him. And now, as the Master Comforter, He takes them in hand, turns the light of Holy Writ upon them and, as with a flash of lightning, illumines the darkness enfolding them with the one question: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?" He refreshes them with His presence, by staying and by going in with them, and finally by the Eucharistic repast. Thus Christ consoles His own.

Thus He consoles us also. "And you are sad?" This question He addresses to all who suffer. A divine and human compassion lies in it; it also contains a mild reproof: "Sad

as are they who have no faith and no hope?" If anyone harkens to the question and looks up to Him, he will experience the Saviour's consolation. In His name this little book addresses to those who suffer in our day the question: "And you are sad?" Its sole purpose is to persuade them all to turn to Him and to accept His comfort.

"And you are sad?" With this question and in this intention it greets those in particular whom war, the fearsome bearer of sorrow, has visited most severely; the countless families upon whom his gory hand has rested, whom he has robbed of father or son; those in which he has widowed the wives, orphaned the children; whose vigorous young men he has crippled; whose dwellings he has destroyed, whose fields he has laid waste, whose possessions he has ruined.

Even in times of peace there is no dearth of suffering, for we cannot abolish grief. But it depends on us, and solely on us, whether we shall grow worse or better, smaller or greater, poorer or richer, eternally unhappy or eter-

nally happy through suffering. And the best counsel and comfort suffering offers is: "Suffer in the spirit of the Crucified Redeemer!"

Our closing words shall be those of the Apostle, with which Cardinal Bellarmine concludes his *Ars Moriendi:*

"Therefore we do not lose heart; but even though our outward man is decaying, yet is our inner man being renewed day by day. For our present light affliction ever more and more abundantly worketh out for us an eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are but temporal, whereas the things that are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. IV, 16 sqq.; Westminster Version).

# *Index*

*References are to Paragraphs, not to Pages*


Activity in Suffering, 41, 207 f.
Affliction (see Grief, Sorrow, Suffering, Woe)
Ambrose, St., 178
Andrew, St., 272
Angela, St., 275
Aristotle, 113
Ars Moriendi, 296
Art and Suffering, 117
Art and the Passion, 154
Art of Dying, 296, 300
Art of Suffering, 29
Attacks, 222 ff.
Augustine, St., 66, 69, 95, 175, 238, 273, 289

Bellarmine, 300
Bernard, St., 276
Bethesda, 191
Beyond Good and Evil, 181, 189
Boethius, 55
Boniface, St., 296

Carpus, St., 274
Catherine of Siena, St., 51, 277
Character, Training of, 61 ff.
Charity and Suffering, 212, 253
Childhood and Suffering, 32 f.
Christ, 89; and Lazarus, 294; and Nature, 98; and Suffering, 128 ff., 136 ff., at Bethesda, 191; at Emmaus, 252; Enemies of, 232; Imitation of, 150 ff.; on Mt. Thabor, 268
Christianity, teachings of regarding Suffering, 118 ff., 124 ff., 131 ff., 183 ff.
Chrysostom, John, St., 55, 73, 171 ff., 209, 214, 278
Compassion, 253 ff.
Consolation from Suffering, 254 ff.; from Holy Writ, 166 ff.
Cowardice, 23
Crispina, St., 273
Cross, The, 142 ff., 272; Following of, 150 ff.

David, 288
Death as Friend, 306; Fear of, 208; Preparedness for, 303; Sorrow of, Sanctified by Christ, 294
Desire for Suffering, 152
Divine Services in Sickness, 210
Domestic Tyrant, 27
Dorothy, St., 274

Ecce homo, 141

Eckhart, 221
Educator, Suffering as, 61 ff.
Egoism, 74 ff., 212, 253 f., 277 f.
Eusebius, 272

Fenélon, 75
Francis of Assisi, St., 307; de Sales, St., 197, 233, 283; Regis, St., 275
Freedom, 72, 242 f.

Gertrude, St., 276
God and Suffering, 126 f.
Goethe, 295
Gregory, St., 230
Grief (see Affliction, Suffering, Woe)
Guilt, Suffering for, 181 ff.

Hartmann, E. v., 246
Hell, 261
Hilty, 82, 229
Holy Writ, 166 ff.
House of God, 251
Humiliation, 231

Illness, 108 ff.; Activity in, 29, 207 f.; and Charity, 211 ff.; and Religion, 202; and the Passion, 204; Minor, 197
Imaginary Suffering, 26 f., 194
Imitation of Christ, 150 f.
Impatience, 260

Jacob, Patriarch, 288
Jean Paul, 38
Joanna of the Cross, Ven., 280
Job, Holy, 177, 257
John of Avila, St., 278
John of the Cross, St., 279
Joy in Suffering, 269 ff.

Ladder, 85
Lazarus, 294
Life, Stream of, 86; Deepening of, 63
Loneliness, 7 f.
Louis, St., 279

Machabees, 168
Magdalene of Pazzi, St., 275
Mankind, Its Burden of Suffering, 11 ff.
Martyrs, 82, 271 ff.
Mater Dolorosa, 155 ff., 220
Maximus, St., 274
Memento mori, 295
Memento vivere, 295
Michelangelo, Pietà, 164
Moods, 75
Morning, 100
Mystics, 78, 89

Nature, 9; Healing Powers of, 92 ff.
Neurasthenics, 195 ff.
Nietzsche, 80
Night, 5, 99, 209
Niobe, 161
Nobility of Suffering, 80 ff.

Pascal, 83
Passion, The, 139 ff., 153, 158 ff., 185, 204; and Art, 154
Patience, 238 ff.
Physician, 73, 76
Pietà, 160 ff.
Pionius, St., 273
Plato, 113
Polycarp, St., 272

Poor Souls, 260 ff.
Poor, The, and Suffering, 15
Prayer in Suffering, 248 f.
Press, The, 225
Psalms, 170, 175
Punishment, 69
Purgatory, 260 ff.

Redemption of Suffering, 146
Religion and Death, 304; Suffering, 130 ff.; War, 71
Resignation, 238 f.
Ruysbroek, 237, 242

Sacrifice, 203, 209, 292
Saints, Communion of, 293
Schopenhauer, 81
Sculptor, 77
Sea, 108
Selfishness, 74 ff., 212, 253 f., 277 f.
Seneca, 34, 36, 82, 295
Shakespeare, 37
Sickness (see also Illness), 191 ff.
Silence, 44 f., 219, 224
Social Duty of Suffering, 25, 213
Socialism, 120 ff.
Socrates, 113
Sorrow (see Grief, Woe, etc.)
Sorrows, Man of, 136 ff., 204; Mother of, 155 ff., 220
Soul, Suffering of the, 215 ff.; Christ's Anguish of, 140; Sufferings of the Christian, 215 ff.
Spring, 102
Stephen, St., 270, 284
Stoics, 26, 37
Storm, 101
Strauss, D. F., 122
Suffering and Activity, 39; and Charity, 212; and Guilt, 181 ff.; and Sin, 125 f.; and the World, 110 ff.; as an Educator, 61 ff.; as a Preacher, 57 f.; as a Teacher, 55 ff.; Art of, 29; Example of, 24 f., 213; Experience in, 57; Heroes of, 23 f., 271 ff.; in Purgatory, 281 ff.; Joy in, 269 ff., 274 ff.; Mankind's Burden of, 11 f.; Mystery of, 124; Nights of, 5, 99; of Christ, 136 ff.; of others, 12 f.; of the just, 91; petty, 26 ff., 60; Slaves of, 24; Symphony of, 22; Wisdom gleaned from, 235 ff.; with Christ, 148, 204, 220
Summer, 103
Suso, Bl. Henry, 34, 78, 96, 223, 249

Tauler, 221, 231
Teacher, Suffering as a, 55 ff.
Tears, 57
Teresa, St., 275, 282
Tertullian, 141
Thabor, Heights of, 268 ff.
Tolstoi, 14
Training for Suffering, 32 ff., 61 ff., 153 f.

Vincent de Paul, St., 281
Vincent Ferrer, St., 278

War and Religion, 71; Woe of, 20

Wine Press, 66, 84
Winter, 104
Wisdom gleaned from Suffering, 235 ff.
Work and Suffering, 40 f., 207
World Power, Suffering a, 18 f.
Writ, Holy, 166 ff.

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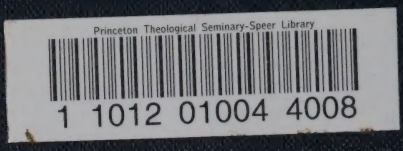
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